



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

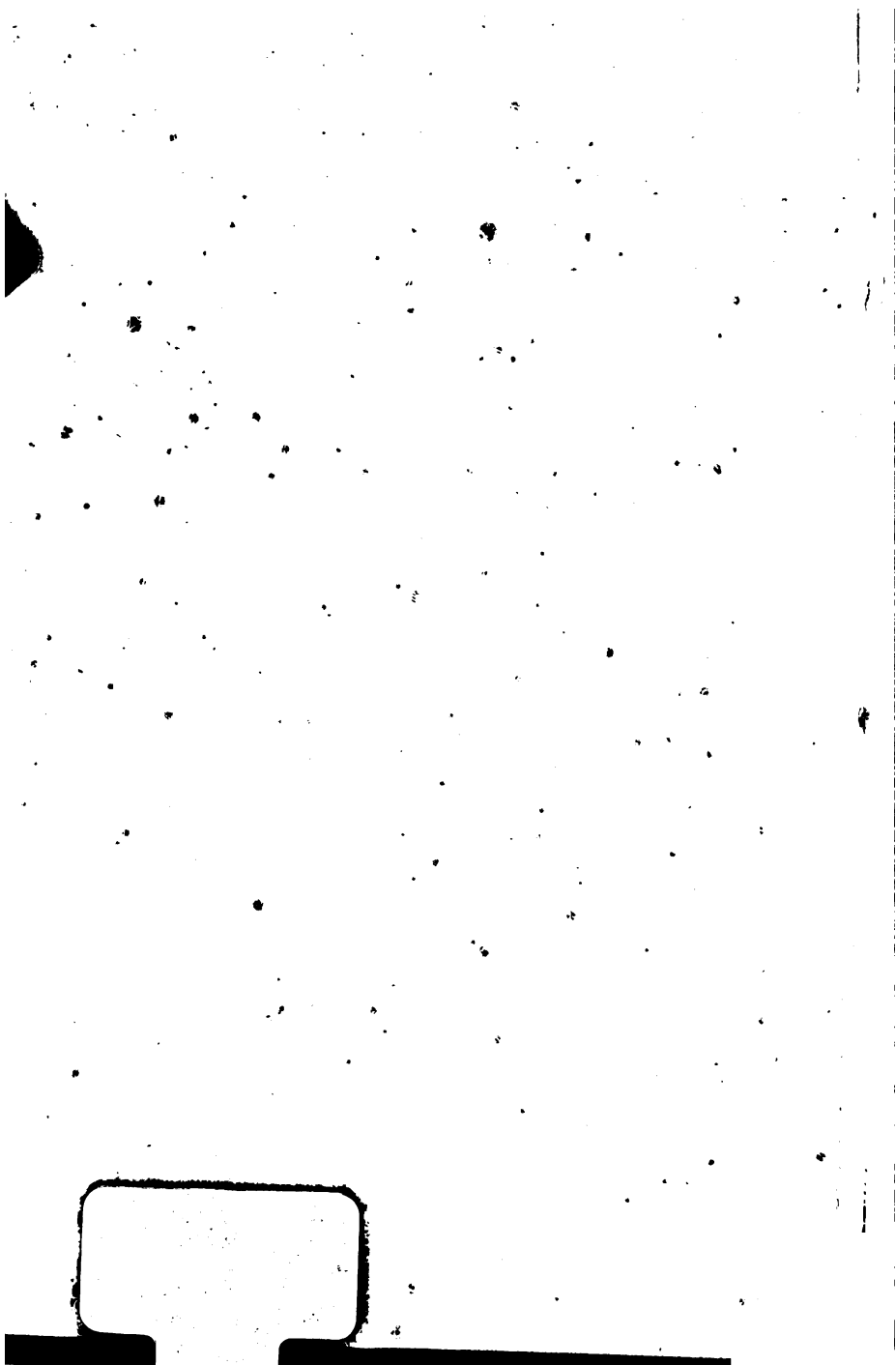
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

RESEDA

by
MRS RANDOLPH



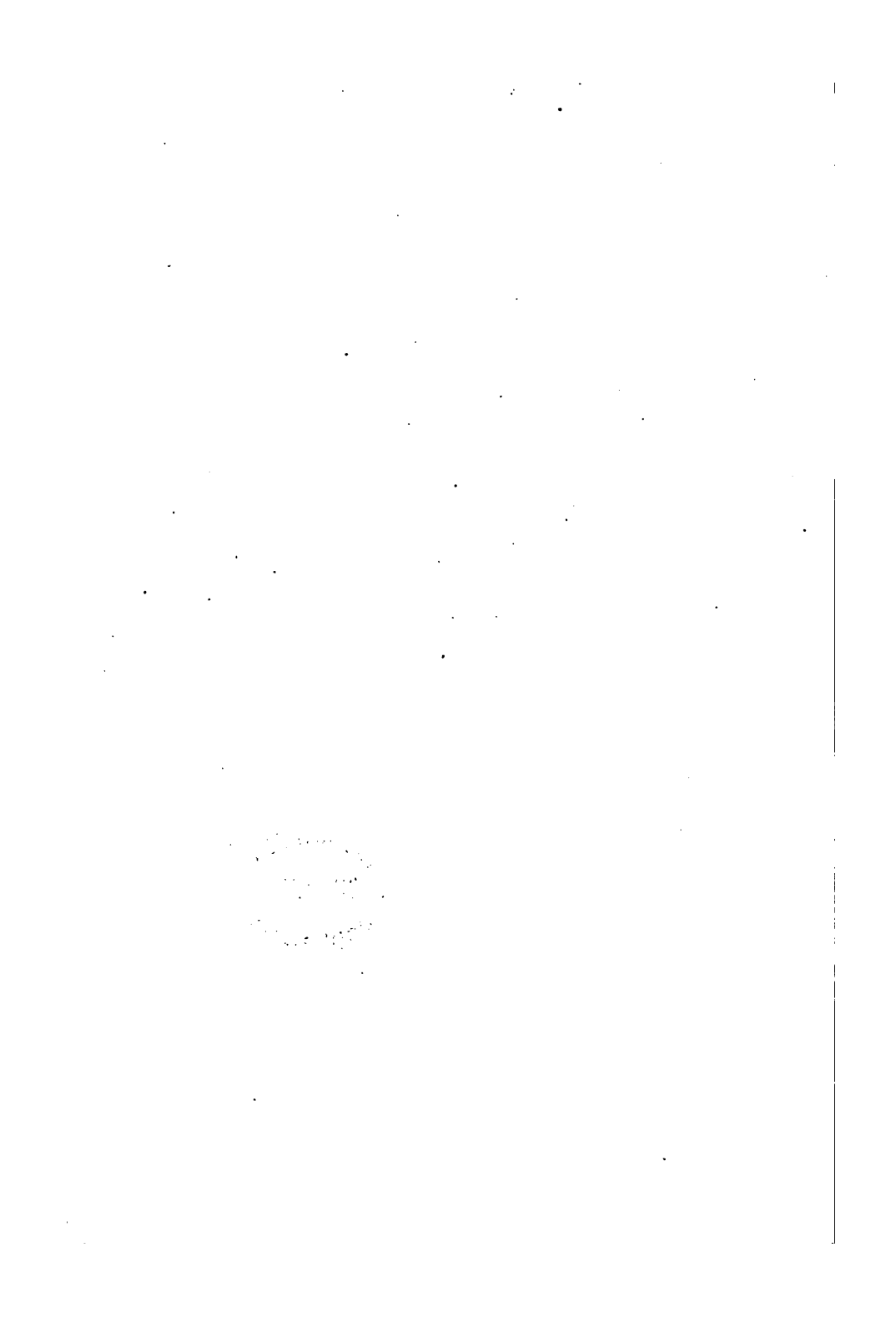




600072542Q

R E S E D A.

VOL. III.



RESEDA

BY

MRS. RANDOLPH

AUTHOR OF

"GENTIANELLA," "WILD HYACINTH,"
"LITTLE PANSY,"
&c., &c.

No gorgeous flowers the meek reseda grace,
Yet sip with eager trunk yon busy race
Her simple cup, nor heed the dazzling gem
That beams in Fritillaria's diadem.

DR. EVANS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

18, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1881.

All rights reserved.

251. i. 4J3.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

RESEDA.

CHAPTER I.

Where is the man who has the power and skill
To stem the torrent of a woman's will ;
For if she will, she will, you may depend on't,
And if she won't, she won't, and there's an end on't.

*ANON., said to have been found on a pillar in
the Dane John Field, Canterbury.*

LORD HEXHAM'S arrival was quickly followed by that of the other guests, among whom was Lord Willibald de Taureville. He had been very much surprised by the determined manner in which Hilda had latterly avoided him ; it was so very different from the

way in which he was accustomed to be treated. It was considered such a distinction to be admired by Lord Willibald, that he generally found high-bred dames and damsels only too eager to encourage his slightest attentions, and it surprised him to find that now, when his intentions were for the first time really serious, and the object of them a young lady who might have been expected to be more enraptured by them than more highly-born maidens, he met with systematic avoidance instead of encouragement.

His vanity was piqued, for he was quite accustomed to be told that he was irresistible, and the compliment was too pleasant to be disbelieved; and in consequence he became more nearly really in love with Hilda than he had ever been with any of his previous flames. He was determined that, before he left Wychwood, the matter should be settled one way or the other, though he could hardly be said to feel any doubt as to what Hilda's decision would be. The only person who he fancied had

any chance against him was Lord Penwarden, and he felt tolerably certain that he had received an unfavourable answer at Beechhurst.

Hilda had taken it for granted that Lord Penwarden would excuse himself from joining the party at the Manor House. She had made her answer so very clear and decisive that he could hardly imagine that there would be any change in her views. But he made no sign, and actually arrived by the same train as Lord Willibald and some of the other guests. She was surprised, but it did not disconcert her much. She had almost quite made up her mind that her marriage to Edwin was illegal, and that she would act upon her newly-acquired knowledge. She was far more in love with Lord Willibald than she had ever been with him, for the glamour of rank was very dazzling to her; and, besides, long practice had rendered him a past master in the art of fascination. Still she felt terrified at what she was about to do. If only she could be safely married before

Edwin heard anything of her engagement! But that was hardly possible. Lord Willibald's rank was sure to make the event the subject for paragraphs in the society papers, while Mr. Cawthorne would never rest till the engagement had been announced over and over again in the "Fashionable Intelligence."

Mr. Cawthorne had not been contented with admonishing Lady Wychwood as to the advisability of her daughter's making up her mind. He had also written a letter to Hilda herself, which, if she had been as ignorant of his intentions as he believed her to be, would have bewildered her very considerably, harping on the necessity of young ladies knowing their own minds, and of "not outstaying their market."

"What am I to say to him?" said Hilda, showing the letter to her mother in some perplexity. "You see I have no business to know that he has any right to interfere."

"Say you have made up your mind, and he

will hear the result soon. I really don't see how else you can answer."

Lady Wychwood said this with some trepidation. She longed to make her daughter take some step by which she would be bound, and yet she dreaded rousing her spirit of opposition. She did not quite understand Hilda, and could not make out whether she cared for Lord Willibald, as she sometimes fancied was the case, or whether there was some one else, some one who would be unacceptable to Mr. Cawthorne, on whom she had perversely set her fancy. Hilda's temper was far from equable, and her mother feared to irritate her, lest she should thus lessen the chances of her wishes being fulfilled. She waited anxiously now to hear Hilda's answer.

"I suppose it is the only thing to say," said Hilda at length, and Lady Wychwood gave a sigh of intense relief, though she refrained from manifesting her satisfaction lest it should cause her daughter to alter her mind.

Lord Willibald had quite determined to propose while at Wychwood, and was pleased to find that Hilda no longer avoided him, but still it seemed absolutely impossible ever to find her alone. Lord Penwarden followed her really like her shadow, and whenever Lord Willibald flattered himself that he had at last got her to himself, he was sure to find his rival seating himself on the other side.

Hilda was in despair. Now that she had made up her mind to dare fate and accept Lord Willibald, she longed to feel that it was done and over, and felt that Lord Penwarden's conduct was unjustifiable. He was enacting the part of a veritable dog in the manger, for as far as bare politeness would permit she showed him very plainly that she disliked his company. He could therefore have no hopes for himself, and yet would not leave her in peace. In fact that was the last thing which Lord Penwarden meant to do: if he had given up hope, he would not have

troubled himself to join the party at Wychwood. He thought that if he could, during that visit, stave off Lord Willibald's proposal, that young gentleman's mercurial temperament would probably induce him to fall in love with some one else before the ensuing season, and that then pique and mortification would cause Hilda to listen favourably, nay, gratefully, to a renewal of his own suit. So he devoted himself entirely to the task of frustrating any possible *tête-à-tête*, thereby, if he had only known it, rendering both parties more determined that it should take place.

Quite unconscious as she was of the feelings he entertained towards her, Mignonette was yet struck by the fact that Lord Hexham was always at her side. She was very glad that it should be so; for she liked him extremely, but she often wondered why he should devote himself to her when there were so many pleasanter people for him to talk to.

Not all the admiration which she had re-

ceived had succeeded in making Mignonette vain. She knew that she was pretty and courted in a ball-room, but she seldom thought about it except at the actual moment, and had no idea that she was generally fascinating. Lord Hexham was always good-natured and ready to help her in any scheme for the amusement of the guests which she might have in hand, and it never once occurred to her that he did it for her sake, and not from general amiability.

But other and more experienced eyes saw more than hers, and it was not long before it was remarked to Lady Wychwood by Mrs. Prioleau, a lady staying in the house, that "Lord Hexham was so very devoted; doubtless an early announcement might be expected."

Lady Wychwood had not an idea what was meant. She fully believed that Lord Hexham was as devoted to her as in the old days in India, when he was Captain Lauriston, and prided herself exceedingly on her

wisdom and discretion in keeping him so completely in the place of a mere ordinary friend. It was true she felt a little surprise that he did not attempt to fall back into the old groove when they happened to be alone, but always explained it to herself by the thought that he saw her wishes, and respected them, even at the sacrifice of his own. So she answered, with the most perfect innocence,

“An announcement? My dear Mrs. Prioleau, what do you mean?”

“Oh, my dear Lady Wychwood, of course I quite understand that, until all is quite settled, you do not wish it talked about. So wise of you—incalculable harm is often done by chattering. But then, I am different. I am quite safe—entirely to be trusted; and I am so interested in the dear girl.”

“But who—what do you mean?” asked Lady Wychwood, in genuine perplexity.

“Oh! it is plain enough; but I am sorry

I referred to it if you would rather the subject were not mentioned."

"I am sure I have no objection to your mentioning it." Lady Wychwood spoke almost irritably in her bewilderment as to what was meant. "I could not have; for I haven't the very faintest idea what it is you mean."

"Do you *really* mean you don't see Lord Hexham's devotion to Miss Wychwood?" asked Mrs. Prioleau, astonished in her turn. "Why, it is so very demonstrative!"

If a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet, Lady Wychwood could not have felt more astounded. Lord Hexham, the man whom she believed to be so entirely devoted to herself, so heartbroken at her having preferred Sir Clement to himself, said to be devoted, demonstratively devoted, to her step-daughter, a mere child, who, to her eyes, was quite a plain, insignificant-looking little thing! Impossible! But yet, as she rapidly recalled the events of the past few days, it dawned upon

her that certainly he had always been at Mignonette's side, and further reflection enabled her to remember that he had been a great deal with her in London.

It was a terrible blow, not to her affection—she had very little of that but for herself, and thought infinitely more of her position and its advantages than of any tender sentiments—but to her vanity. That she, who to her own eyes was as beautiful as she had ever been, should be deserted by the man whom she had believed to be so hopelessly devoted to her, and for a little, insignificant-looking chit of seventeen! It was monstrous, and yet, now that it had once been suggested to her, she felt a momentarily-increasing conviction that it was true.

It was some moments before she could command her voice sufficiently to say,

“Lord Hexham and Reseda! My dear Mrs. Prioleau, can you really be serious? Think of the difference of age!”

“Of course he is much older, but still he

looks quite a young man. Certainly there can be no doubt as to *his* wishes, and she seems to like his society. Do you really mean it had never struck you?"

"Indeed it had not, and even now I can hardly think it is quite as you fancy. Lord Hexham happens to be intimate here, and knew Reseda before she came out. I think you have mistaken friendship and kindness on his part for love."

"It *may* be so," said Mrs. Prioleau, slowly, "but I shall be very much surprised if it is. About her I cannot judge; she certainly seems quite unconscious."

"She is such a mere child."

"Well, you can hardly say that of a girl of seventeen and a half, who has gone through a London season and all the admiration she received without being in the least spoilt. I wish she had not refused my nephew, young Reginald Allanton."

"What?" ejaculated Lady Wychwood—Mrs. Prioleau's disclosures seemed destined to as-

tonish her this morning—"refused Captain Allanton!—Reseda!"

"I ought not to have said a word about it, but I thought, of course, you knew. Pray forget that I said anything about it; he would be furious. He confided in me when he heard I was coming here, and begged me to observe and see if there was any hope for him."

"And what shall you say?"

"That it is very evident what Lord Hexham's hopes are, but that I really cannot tell whether she encourages him or not."

When Lady Wychwood was shortly after left alone, her thoughts were in a perfect whirl. Apart from her mortification at Lord Hexham's homage being transferred to another, she dreaded inexpressibly his becoming nearly connected with the family. Hitherto Sir Clement, knowing that the family name of Hexham was Dorimer, had naturally never imagined that the present bearer of the title had been known by any other than that name before his accession to it; but, if Mignonette

were engaged to him, the fact must become known that he had borne the name, which his grandfather had assumed, of Lauriston, and it could no longer be disguised that the man she had been forbidden to see again had been admitted to the house on a footing of the greatest intimacy.

Lady Wychwood knew that her ascendancy over her husband was very great, but she well knew his straightforwardness and honesty, and that a deception such as she had practised upon him was a thing which he would find it almost impossible to forgive. No, it could not be allowed ; she must speak to him.

But she hesitated. Might not speaking to him on the subject be just the means of bringing about the catastrophe which she dreaded ? Might it not, after all, be only Mrs. Prioleau's imagination which attached such importance to Lord Hexham's kindness—Lady Wychwood could not bring herself to call it anything else—to Mignonette ? She hardly knew what to do, and watched the pair for a day

or two most earnestly. Certainly it looked very much as if Mrs. Prioleau were right: there seemed little doubt of Lord Hexham's sentiments, but Mignonette's were less easy to determine. At length, finding herself alone with him, Lady Wychwood could keep silence no longer.

"Vere,"—he started violently, she had never called him by his name since Sir Clement had introduced him to her as Lord Hexham, excepting in her letters—"Vere, I wish you would not make Reseda conspicuous."

"Conspicuous! What do you mean?"

"Why, you are always at her side, and people are beginning to remark upon it, and to ask me if there is anything in it. Of course I know there cannot be; but it always does a girl harm to be talked about."

"Why should there be nothing in it?" asked Lord Hexham, quietly, turning his face slightly away from her. "Miss Wychwood is a singularly attractive girl."

Lady Wychwood knew in a moment from

his voice that Mrs. Prioleau was right—he loved Mignonette! She bit her lip with mortification, and then set herself to counteract his wishes.

“Well, for one thing, you must allow that there is a slight difference of age.”

“More than a slight one, I am quite willing to admit; but that is surely a matter which only concerns her. If she were willing to overlook it, it could surely matter to no one else?”

“I don’t know what Sir Clement might say.”

“If I were once so fortunate as to win his daughter’s consent, Sir Clement is far too affectionate a father to disapprove without good reason.”

“But—are you so sure of her?”

“No, not yet; I can only hope—and wait.”

“I would not hope too much if I were you.”

“Why?” He turned towards her in-

quiringly. "You mean something special?"

4 "Well, I *know* nothing definite," hesitatingly; "Reseda does not honour me with her confidence—I only heard the other day quite by accident of her having refused a very good offer in London."

"But you suspect something?"

"Yes—in my own mind I feel tolerably sure that her heart is already given."

Lord Hexham was silent; Lady Wychwood's tactics had completely deceived him. He had realised that she might possibly choose to be jealous and to feel hurt at his having presumed to worship at an alien shrine; but the line she had taken threw him completely off his guard. There was no reference to their former relations by word or even by implication—she seemed to be really only anxious to save him from disappointment; he had wronged her in thinking that her vanity would be hurt. At the same time his own *amour propre* was unconsciously rather wounded at finding that such was not the case.

Lady Wychwood continued, after a pause,

"I *know* nothing, as I say—perhaps I am mistaken; but I have a strong impression that it is as I tell you."

"It would not be a good match for her," said Lord Hexham, slowly, and thinking of Edgar, and of what he had observed in London: evidently Lady Wychwood's eyes had been as sharp as his own.

"Well, no—not exactly, of course," she replied, thinking of Wilfred; "but you know how devoted to her Sir Clement is; he would never refuse anything that he thought was for her happiness."

"I know that. And you really think——"

"Yes, I think she has made her choice. I do not say I am certain—I only ask you not to make people talk; you can wait and watch the turn of events."

"I would do anything rather than injure her."

"I am so sure of that, or I should not have spoken."

While this conversation was taking place in the boudoir, one even more interesting to Lady Wychwood was proceeding in the billiard-room. Lord Penwarden and his host had become absorbed in a discussion of some scientific point, and Sir Clement at length insisted on adjourning to the library, there to consult authorities and settle the question.

Lord Willibald did not lose the opportunity, but at once suggested, in a low voice, to Hilda that she should give him his revenge for the game she had won the day before, and they disappeared from the drawing-room so quietly as to be unobserved by the rest of the young people.

Hilda knew perfectly well what was coming, and was desperately nervous. She believed herself to be safe, and yet she trembled with terror lest, after all, Edwin should have more power over her than she believed. She had made up her mind to risk it, but constantly there would come to her mind the

dreadful thought, "Suppose, after all, I am really married?" Still she was determined that she would accept Lord Willibald, and knew the important moment had arrived, though she strove to look perfectly unconscious as she stood apparently absorbed in selecting her cue.

But Lord Willibald had experienced too much difficulty in obtaining this *tête-à-tête*, and was too fearful of interruption by his enemy, Lord Penwarden, to waste a moment, and he at once began.

"Miss Roston, I don't think what I am going to say will surprise you. Ever since I first met you, you have been the one object of all my thoughts. I think—I hope—that my devotion has not been unobserved, and that I may venture to think you have given me some encouragement. Will you make me the happiest of men? Will you be my wife?"

Again the feeling of terror almost overpowered Hilda. She could not speak, and

positively trembled, but Lord Willibald, having naturally no clue to the cause of her evident timidity, took it for the evidence of love, and at once followed up his advantage.

"I have been longing to say this," he observed, putting his arm round her waist, "but I have never had an opportunity. Even at Beechhurst it was impossible ever to get you alone, and here that fellow Penwarden has been positively your shadow. But Hilda—I may call you so, dearest, may I not?—say you love me, darling—tell me you will make me the happiest man in England."

Which was the literal truth, and no figure of speech: Lord Willibald firmly believing in a large fortune as the only real happiness.

At length Hilda spoke.

"I fancied you cared for me, but—but I wasn't sure."

"Dearest, I thought it must have been

only too plain to everyone. But, Hilda darling, you haven't given me your answer yet."

He hardly seemed as if he needed it: his arm encircled her firmly, and he pressed kiss after kiss on her half-averted cheek. It was far more satisfactory love-making than Edwin had ever had much opportunity for, the billiard-room being a somewhat safer and more private spot than Kensington Gardens.

At length Hilda condescended to murmur, "Yes," but she followed it as soon as speech was again allowed her with, "but——"

"But what, sweetest? Surely you will not spoil our happiness by conditions. At any rate, call me Willibald first."

"Indeed, Willibald, you—you mustn't be angry. I must say it. I will—be engaged to you, but—but we must wait a year, and—and no one must know—except, of course, mamma, and——" She was just about to

say Mr. Cawthorne, but remembered in time that she was not supposed to know anything of his intentions. "And Sir Clement, of course."

"Oh, Hilda! a whole year!" exclaimed Lord Willibald in dismay.

He was very impressionable on the subject of beauty, and really believed himself to be very much in love with Hilda, but he could not help a rapid mental calculation as to whether his finances would last so long without replenishment, and also whether it were better to wait for Mr. Cawthorne's doubtless splendid settlement, or to sacrifice himself to a smaller fortune more immediately attainable. Oh! but doubtless this was but a whim, and, once engaged, Hilda would soon be talked out of it. At any rate, the engagement might be quietly announced to such of his creditors as might become too importunate. So he resigned himself and continued,

"Of course, dearest, everything, both now

and always, must be as you wish, but a year is a very long time."

So Hilda thought: so long that by the time it had elapsed she felt as if there must surely be some means out of her difficulty. It had been a sudden inspiration to ask for time, a sort of straw of safety to which she had clung without quite knowing what good it would do her. But at the moment it seemed a real safeguard, and she kept to her resolution all through the next half-hour, during which Lord Willibald devoted himself to fervent love-making, and to endeavours to persuade her to rescind what she had said. At the end of that time they were disturbed by two or three of the party, among whom was Lord Penwarden, whose brow darkened as he saw at a glance, by the disturbed countenances of the young people, that what he had taken such trouble to prevent had occurred after all.

Hilda left the room, and beckoning her mother out of the drawing-room, told her all that had happened. She was delighted

to hear that Lord Willibald was accepted, but exclaimed in dismay at Hilda's stipulation.

"Silly child! What nonsense! But of course you will not keep to it."

"Yes, mamma, and he understands that I shall. And no one is to know but you, and, I suppose, Sir Clement."

"No; if it is to be a secret at all, no one must know but ourselves, and, of course, Mr. Cawthorne. I am afraid he will be very much vexed at this fancy of yours. Come, Hilda, do be reasonable. Tell Lord Willibald you only said it to try him, and let the whole thing be forgotten."

"No, mamma, I *will* wait a year, and I *won't* have anyone know that I am engaged but you. If you don't agree to what I say, I'll tell Lord Willibald I won't marry him at all."

Hilda looked so very determined, and Lady Wychwood thought it so very probable that, if thwarted in her whim, she would carry her

threat into execution, that she hastened to soothe her, saying,

“ Well, my dear, I don’t at all understand you, but I suppose, if Lord Willibald agrees, it must be as you like. Certainly, if you insist on waiting, it is better no one should know of the engagement.”

“ Very well, then that is settled,” and Hilda left the room.

“ After all, I daresay it is only a caprice, and she will change her mind and be sensible,” mused Lady Wychwood. “ I am sure I hope so. Well, I had better write to Mr. Cawthorne at once. I am afraid he will have no patience with such nonsense.”

And, her letter written, she returned to the drawing-room, and received, with such well-feigned surprise, Lord Penwarden’s attempted congratulations, and assured him so earnestly and so innocently that he was quite mistaken, that nothing was further from her daughter’s mind than such an alliance, that he was almost persuaded that his eyes had deceived him

in the billiard-room, and resumed his watchfulness to prevent a *tête-à-tête* between the young couple.

CHAPTER II.

What man so wise, what earthly wit so rare,
 As to descry the crafty, cunning train
 By which Deceit doth mask in visor fair,
 And seem like Truth, whose shape she well can feign.
 SPENSER.

The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below.
 CAMPBELL.

MR. CAWTHORNE, as Lady Wychwood had anticipated, was exceedingly angry on hearing of Hilda's stipulation for a year's delay. It was nonsense and absurd affectation, he wrote: having at last condescended to make up her mind—he was sure she had not hurried herself; why could not she be married at once and have done with it? He would

probably have been still more angry, if he had for a moment believed that she would adhere to her decision, but he settled that it was only a whim of which she would soon tire, probably all the sooner if she found it was unopposed. Lady Wychwood carefully encouraged this view, which at first was her own, but which she soon began to fear was erroneous. Hilda was, as she had very soon discovered, intensely obstinate, and she seemed so positively set upon having her own way in this instance that her mother felt very little hope of her changing her mind. But she did not admit this to Mr. Cawthorne, and contrived to soothe him so skilfully that he at length gave a reluctant promise that he would not say a word about the engagement until Hilda chose that it should be announced. Lady Wychwood gave a sigh of relief when he conceded this; time, she reflected, flew past with marvellous rapidity, and even if, as she feared, Hilda held out for the full time, a year would pass very quickly.

It required some ingenuity to avoid having the Cawthornes at Wychwood that winter, and also to parry Mr. Cawthorne's desire to have his god-daughter at Manchester. Hilda, quite aware that, if she went there, she should be exposed to persecution as to her stipulation of a year's grace, positively refused to go, thereby involving her mother in a network of inventions and prevarications respecting multifarious and often apocryphal engagements. She was positively grateful to Ella for having a slight attack of measles in February, just at the time when, country-house parties being over, she was at her wits' end for some excuse to elude the constant invitations. Mrs. Cawthorne thought it an excellent opportunity for Hilda to come to them and avoid the risk of infection, and such would probably have been the opinion of the rest of the world, but Lady Wychwood chose to see it otherwise.

"Dearest Hilda had been with her sister up to the very moment of the disease declaring

itself; there was no possibility of knowing whether she might not have caught the infection; and, though perfectly certain that dear Mrs. Cawthorne would do everything that was kind, still she could not reconcile herself to the possibility of her darling child being laid up away from her."

Of course no one could object to this, and then a good deal was made of a slight feverish cold which Hilda caught, and Lady Wychwood insisted on her staying in bed, and declared that she was uncertain, and assured Mrs. Cawthorne that the doctor was so likewise, whether it was not a very mild attack of the same malady. So between the illness, the convalescence, which was spun out as long as possible, and the visit to Torquay for change of air, it was time to go to London before the quarantine was removed:

Hilda now did not care for the luncheons in Palace Gardens; it was no longer the only house where she could meet the man

she loved, as was the case during her infatuation respecting Edwin. Lord Willibald she met everywhere she went, besides seeing him constantly at home, and, although she still obstinately refused to allow her engagement to be announced before the end of the season, people were beginning to assume that the marriage was as good as settled, and to congratulate Lady Wychwood, who always declared herself quite incapable of understanding why they should suppose such was the case.

Edwin wrote but seldom, and Hilda fancied that his letters were considerably less warm than formerly, which, though it mortified her vanity, decidedly relieved her mind. He was still at Monaco, and it seemed as if he meant to remain there—at least, he said nothing indicating any change of plans. Hilda had so constantly heard the observation that he could never show his face again in England that she was beginning to think he would not care to claim her, even if she were really bound

to him, which she now had fully persuaded herself she was not. When she was once safely married and was rich, as doubtless she would be, she could send him some money, and that would be much more useful to him than she could be; and, when once the deed was done, he would see there was no use in making a fuss. She almost wished now she had not stipulated for delay: she had done so in an unaccountable access of terror, and she was too obstinate, or, as she called it, too proud, to change her mind.

The present season was not so pleasant to her as the two preceding ones had been. Of course, now that Ella was out, three young ladies could not go out together. Miss Wychwood's name was invariably on every card, and Hilda and Ella had to divide the remainder between them. Ella was not in the least inclined to give up any of her share, and so Hilda frequently found herself obliged to remain at home. Mignonette, who was always more desirous for the pleasure of others than

for her own, was very anxious to give up some of her parties to them, but Lady Wychwood answered sharply that it was very easy to offer what she knew quite well could not be accepted: if people asked Miss Wychwood, they expected to see her, and not Miss Roston.

Lady Wychwood did not particularly care for the task of taking out her younger daughter. Ella had fulfilled the promise of her youth, and had grown up decidedly plain, and her mother, who could not believe in any woman's having the slightest success without beauty, regarded her as a certain failure. Unfortunately, she had always instilled into the girl that, plain as she was, her only hope of being attractive was to be clever, and to say smart, amusing things; and, lacking the necessary cleverness, Ella only succeeded in making pert and often *risqué* speeches, and in being quoted by many people as an objectionably fast, slang girl. Miss Ashstead had done her very utmost to subdue this tendency in her

pupil, and so long as she remained she continued to exercise some salutary influence over Ella; but she left almost immediately the family moved to London, and in a very short time all her counsels were cast to the winds and forgotten.

Miss Ashstead's departure was a very great sorrow to Mignonette. She loved very dearly the first person who had taken an interest in her childish pursuits, and been a companion to her loneliness, and their mutual affection had grown and strengthened year by year. Ever since she came out, Mignonette had passed much time in the school-room, and, excepting on the one topic of Edgar, her heart and mind were to her old governess as an open book.

The parting was a sore trial to both, the more so as Miss Ashstead had accepted a situation in Scotland in a family who rarely visited London, and their chances of future meeting would be but scanty.

Ella, who was only too thankful to escape

from what she considered thralldom, was almost too much amazed for speech when, coming into the school-room, now to be known as the girls' room, the day after Miss Ashstead's departure, she found Mignonette, her head resting on her arms crossed upon the table, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Reseda! Good gracious! what is the matter?"

Mignonette looked up, and brushed away her tears.

"Only I couldn't help it, Ella; it seemed so desolate without dear Miss Ashstead—and to think she would never be here again!"

"Bless us, is that all? I'm sure I don't feel at all inclined to cry. It's all very well for you, who were out of her clutches, and need never come near the room unless you liked; but I'm only too glad to get rid of the cross old thing and her precise ways. It used to drive me nearly wild sometimes to see her sitting pursing up her mouth, as if she were always saying 'prunes and prism.'"

"The dearest and kindest friend in the whole world."

"May be to you. I speak as I find. She was always down on me. It's a real blessing to be able to speak as one likes—it's awfully jolly to be free!"

It was a freedom Mignonette did not appreciate, but she said no more, and regretted that Ella should have seen her distress, when she found her making an excellent joke of an exaggerated version of the occurrence for the amusement of a large party at luncheon. Lord Hexham was present, and, seeing her flush of annoyance, he exerted himself to silence Ella, which, as he was the only person excepting Sir Clement, who was not present on this occasion, of whom she stood in the least awe, he at length succeeded in effecting, and was rewarded by a glance of gratitude which made his heart beat.

Though he was not so constantly at Mignonette's side as at the manor, being determined that Lady Wychwood should not again have

the opportunity of accusing him of rendering her conspicuous, he yet watched her every movement narrowly. He had come to the determination to watch and wait through this season, and then, if he saw no symptom of her caring for anyone, to try his fate. It was impossible, he told himself, that she could continue to care for Edgar, whom she never saw. Perhaps, indeed, after all, he had made too much of her evident pleasure at once more seeing an old playfellow. At any rate, for this one season he would watch.

Lady Wychwood, who believed firmly that it was Wilfred that he feared Mignonette cared for, and who was by no means without hope that such was really the case, took more pains to have her son in Belgrave Square than she had ever done before, and to throw him and her step-daughter together. There was no difficulty about this, for he simply worshipped Mignonette, and she, though perfectly unconscious of his devotion, was always pleased to talk to him, finding his genuine artistic en-

thusiasm far more entertaining than most of the common-places of every-day conversation. But it was not easy to tempt Wilfred from his studio. He had just returned from a winter spent in Rome, and was feverishly anxious to make use at once of all he had there acquired. Besides, he recognized in Mignonette a disturbing element in his work: true she was an inspiration, and when he had been talking to her he walked home feeling as if there was nothing of which he was not capable, but the next day she came between him and his work, her face floated between him and the canvas, and he recognized regretfully that her society, sweet as it was, was an intoxication to be indulged in but rarely. Still he could not always resist the attraction, and was certainly in Belgrave Square considerably oftener than had formerly been the case.

As usual Lady Wychwood was to give a ball, in a house in Grosvenor Place, as Sir Clement would not hear of his own house in Belgrave Square being disturbed, and this year

she had achieved the coveted distinction of the promise of the presence of a member of the royal family, which absolutely transported her with delight, and gave unspeakable satisfaction to Mr. Cawthorne.

A week before the day appointed for the festivities Lady Wychwood received a letter from her sister, Miss Mary Jones, stating that their mother was very ill, and that she was very anxious to see her youngest daughter. It was always difficult for Lady Wychwood to arrange an expedition to Balham. Now that the girls were out, it was not easy to dispose of them during the time of her absence so as to avoid any question as to where she was going alone.

However, just as she was in some perplexity (for she dared not neglect a letter of her sister's, lest Mary should fulfil the threats she had occasionally used, and inform Sir Clement of their connection with her), Mrs. Cawthorne came in to ask if the three girls would like to go to the private view of the flower-show in

the Horticultural Gardens, and then lunch with her. It was the very thing, and though Hilda was not particularly anxious to go, and Ella openly said it would be a bore, their mother refused to listen to them, and they found themselves driving to South Kensington rather against their will. The moment they were gone Lady Wychwood, plainly dressed and thickly veiled, set off on her expedition to Balham.

The sitting-room was untenanted, but she was joined there almost immediately by her sister. Mary Jones was certainly a strange contrast to Lady Wychwood. Instead of Cecilia's graceful, willowy figure, she was broad and thick-set; in place of the younger sister's delicate features, roseleaf complexion, and luxuriant fair hair, her features were of a common type, her face red, and her hair thin and thickly streaked with grey. In dress, too, they were very dissimilar. Though Lady Wychwood was attired with studious plainness, her dress seemed positively gorgeous

when contrasted with her sister's coarse, rusty, ill-fitting black stuff. Mary's hair was tumbled, her collar was awry, and she wore no cuffs—all which details jarred Cecilia, and made her feel a sort of marvel at the incongruity of this common, coarse-looking woman being really her sister. She had always felt it more or less, but on this occasion it struck her even more forcibly than usual.

"What is it?" she asked: "something serious, I suppose, or you would not have sent for me."

"No, I shouldn't have troubled you if it had been a trifle," returned Mary, with a slight sneer; "I know you don't care for the trouble of coming down here, though poor dear mother cares more for a sight of you than for anything on earth."

"You know very well how difficult it is for me to get away; I should come oftener if I could."

"There's nothing to prevent you that I know of, except your stuck-up pride, that

makes you ashamed to acknowledge your own flesh and blood. However, we needn't go over all that again. I was determined you should see for yourself how bad mother is; then you can't disbelieve it because it's convenient."

"What is it?"

"A stroke—and the doctor says she can't last more than three or four days."

"Surely it can't be so bad as that?"

All the affection which Lady Wychwood could spare from herself and her children was given to her mother, and she looked and felt thoroughly shocked.

"Ay, but it is. This is Thursday, and he said this morning she couldn't last beyond Tuesday at furthest."

"Let me see her."

"She can't speak, but I believe she'll be glad to see you; she always cared more for you than for all the rest of us put together."

As she spoke, Mary led the way to her mo-

ther's room, where the poor old lady lay helpless and speechless. It was evident from her countenance, and from her frantic efforts to speak, that she recognised and was delighted to see her favourite daughter. Lady Wychwood knelt down by the bed and kissed her, saying how grieved she was to see her so ill, and expressing the hopes which come involuntarily to the tongue in a sick-room of speedy recovery. But, after a little, it was evident that the excitement was injuring the patient, and the sisters returned to the sitting-room.

"Have you everything you want—a nurse and everything?" asked Lady Wychwood, her eyes full of tears.

"I have a nurse at night; I can do all that's wanted by day. Still a little more money would be useful."

"I thought it might be," said Lady Wychwood, taking two ten-pound notes out of her purse. "You will let me know every day how she is?"

"Do you mean to say you are not coming down every day?"

"Mary, do be reasonable! How can I? It was a mere chance my being able to come out unobserved to-day. If I were to be absent again for so long, naturally there would be a question where I had been."

"I don't see why you shouldn't."

"I daresay not," impatiently; "you have no idea what sort of life mine is."

"One of vanity and amusement and self-seeking, as it was when you were a girl, I don't doubt. You'd make no difficulty about going out to some amusement for hours longer than it takes you to come here."

"Haven't you the sense to see that it is quite different? It isn't the being out of the house; if I can say where I have been, of course there is no reason why I shouldn't be out all day; but, if I come here, I can give no account of myself, and it is awkward."

"Then, instead of coming down to see

your mother, you'll be dancing when she's dying?"

"I have never danced since Colonel Roston died."

"Well, it's all one: you'll go to balls and parties just the same."

"Can't you see I must? What possible reason could I give for not going?"

"Tell the truth, late in the day as it is."

"Mary, you must be mad. What would Sir Clement say? If I had told him at first—I wish now I had—it would have been all very well; but I did not know him so well then, and now it would be simply impossible. He would never forgive me—never trust me again. You know how vexed mother would be at your even talking of such a thing. She quite understood my position."

"Yes; you could always persuade her to anything. But that don't make it right."

"Mary, it can do you no possible good

to injure me. Heaven knows I've done all I can for my family; and when I had to pay for Hugh, too, it was a cruel drag upon me. You must allow I had reason to be ashamed of him, and to do anything to prevent his ruining my prospects just as I was making a good start in life. And it was to escape any danger of his connection with me ever cropping up that I gave mother's name instead of father's. But it can, as I say, do you no good to injure me. As I have always promised, when mother is gone you shall have just the same income, if only you don't annoy me."

"It goes against me, still I've as good as promised mother I'll hold my tongue. If I do, it will be for her sake, not for yours."

Lady Wychwood felt that, if only her sister consented to continue to hold her tongue, she did not very much care for whose sake it was she did so.

"Then it is settled. It is to be peace

between us, not war?" she said, as she rose to depart, and held out her hand.

Mary did not take it.

"I make no promises," she said. "It goes against me to think of you singing and dancing, as one may say, alongside of our mother's grave. I mayn't be able to keep them, though I'll try for her sake. As to your not being able to stop going out if you liked, of course that's all nonsense. You could do it well enough, if you chose."

"You don't understand. It's not for myself; there are the girls and Miss Wychwood."

"Tell them you're tired, and mean to stop at home a bit, and that they must go by themselves."

"Impossible! Young ladies couldn't do such a thing."

"Then say they must stop at home till you choose to take them. It isn't for young things to be dictating to their elders."

Lady Wychwood was silent. It was useless to talk to her sister, who knew none of her difficulties, and nothing of the circumstances of her life. She mentally congratulated herself that Mary never saw any fashionable papers, and was, happily, ignorant that she was going to give a ball the ensuing week, and would never see her name in any of the lists of guests at other houses. It seemed to her she had it very much in her own hands to let her sister know as much or as little as she pleased of what she did.

The interview had already been longer than she intended, and with one more kiss to her mother, and an injunction to Mary to be sure and let her hear every day, she took her departure.

Lady Wychwood only reached home just in time, for Mrs. Cawthorne brought the three girls home not five minutes after her return. Then they had to dress for two or three afternoon parties. There

was a dinner at home, and afterwards a party and a ball. Lady Wychwood went through it all, looking as usual, talking quite as much as was her wont, and noticing everything that went on around her: who danced with the girls, and how the latter seemed to be comporting themselves; and yet through it all she saw clearly and vividly before her her mother as she had that day seen her on her deathbed.

Mary Jones was mistaken in thinking that it was for her own pleasure that her sister was so steadfast in refusing to give up her gaieties. Dearly as Lady Wychwood loved the world and all its pomps and vanities, such was very far from being the case. If it had rested with her to choose, she would gladly have remained at home; but, as she had said—but Mary could not understand, not being initiated in the unvarying routine of fashionable dissipation, which never permits its regular votaries to miss anything—she could not do so without a reason, and,

as she could not give the real one, there was nothing to be done.

Every morning she watched eagerly for the letter, and when, on the Tuesday morning, it contained the announcement that all was over, she pleaded a headache, and did not appear at luncheon.

But the ball at which she was to entertain royalty was fixed for the Thursday; there was far too much to be done, ordered, and arranged for her to be able to remain quiet, though her daughters exclaimed how ill she looked; Sir Clement begged her to rest and leave everything to the girls, and Mignonette said little, but strove in every way she could think of to save her trouble, fatigue, or annoyance. But she could not rest; the excitement, and the sorrow she really felt, had attacked her nerves, and she could not persuade herself that it was possible to rest without betraying her secret. She insisted upon it that she was quite well, had only had a slight headache in the morning,

which had completely left her, and was quite able to do everything that was required of her.

That Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were days which Cecilia Wychwood never forgot to her dying day. The constant bustle and excitement with the undercurrent of misery were an ordeal through which few would care to pass. To add to her trouble on the Wednesday, she received another letter from Mary.

"Is it possible, as I accidentally saw in the paper this evening, that you give a ball on Thursday? You have surely given it up? If not, I will not answer for being able to keep your precious secret."

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we venture to deceive!"

There was nothing Lady Wychwood felt to be done but to write at once, "MY DEAR MARY,—Of course I have," which was written on very deeply-edged paper, and which she posted herself, as she gene-

rally did her epistles to Balham. She turned sick at the thought of what Mary might have done if she had not written that letter. Perhaps have come to the house just before they started for the ball, made a scene before the servants, scandalized Sir Clement, shocked the girls, ruined her whole life! She began to wonder if it would not be possible to persuade her to go out to Australia and make a home for Hugh. If she only would, Lady Wychwood determined that, even if she had to pawn her jewels, the money required should not be wanting.

But, in spite of all her troubles, when the important night arrived, Lady Wychwood took her place looking as brilliant as was her wont. No one knew that, for the first time in her life, she had had recourse to rouge, or guessed that, beneath that smooth exterior, lay a terribly aching heart. Everything went off as well as she could wish: the royal guests intimated their extreme satisfaction with their entertainment, the decorations

were pronounced lovely, the supper excellent; the festivities were prolonged to an unusually advanced hour, and Sir Clement, like everyone else, believed that it was only fatigue that made his wife fall fainting in his arms, just as the carriage was ready to take them home to Belgrave Square.

CHAPTER III.

Spite is a little word, but it represents as strange a jumble of feelings and compound of discords as any polysyllable in the language.

DICKENS.

If a man be endowed with a generous mind, this is the best kind of nobility.

PLATO.

LADY WYCHWOOD'S fainting-fit was not a prolonged one, but it annoyed her excessively. It was so unusual for her to be otherwise than quite well, or to show any symptom of feeling fatigue, that she felt as if it must in some way betray her secret, or at any rate render Sir Clement suspicious that something unusual was amiss. Conscience

made the proverbial coward of her, and she saw in his anxiety and his assiduous endeavours the next day to spare her either annoyance or fatigue, only a desire to fathom the secret of which she had betrayed the possession. In fact, grief and anxiety had completely upset and unhinged her, and she absolutely required rest and quiet. Sir Clement would not hear of her going out on the Friday night, and, when she murmured something about the girls, declared that they must either stay at home or go with Mrs. Cawthorne, of which alternative Hilda and Ella gladly availed themselves.

Sir Clement and Mignonette breakfasted alone together on the Saturday morning, and both enjoyed the rare occasion of a *tête-à-tête*. They sat dawdling over their meal, and talking till nearly eleven o'clock, when the butler entered the room and informed Sir Clement that "a young person wished to see him."

"A young person! What does he want?"

Simpkins coughed.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Clement, it is a young woman."

"A young woman! Are you sure she asked for me?"

"Quite sure, Sir Clement."

"Well, I will see her in the library. Mignonette, it is such a lovely morning, we will go later and sit in the park." And Sir Clement went off to interview his unexpected visitor.

A stout, elderly woman, in deep mourning, awaited him. It was certainly, Sir Clement thought, Simpkins' courtesy that induced him to call her a "young person."

"You wish to see me?" he said, bowing as he entered. "Pray be seated."

Mary Jones seated herself opposite to him, and raised her crape veil.

"You are Sir Clement Wychwood?"

"Yes."

"Did your wife give a ball the night before last?"

"She did," replied Sir Clement, much surprised, and feeling almost inclined to add—"What possible business can that be of yours?" but, restraining himself, he only looked inquiringly at his visitor.

"Then she lied! I thought as much!"

Sir Clement started to his feet.

"Pray," he said, in a cold, severe tone, "confine yourself to whatever business you may happen to have with me, and leave Lady Wychwood's name alone. It can in no way concern you."

Mary Jones laughed bitterly.

"You will soon see that it does. Curious the power she has to fool men—she always had. Oh! you needn't look so furious, Sir Clement, I've a good right to speak. Your wife is my sister."

"Lady Wychwood has no sisters," replied Sir Clement, coldly, and beginning to imagine that his visitor was insane. "My time is valuable. Be good enough to state at once what it is you want."

"To undeceive you, to tell you that your wife's maiden name was Jones, not Distin, that she had a mother, brother, and sister alive, of whom she was ashamed, and that she wouldn't acknowledge, that her mother died on Monday, that she knew it, and that she still gave this ball."

"I do not believe a single syllable of all this," said Sir Clement, calmly looking his visitor full in the eyes. He had no doubt now of her insanity.

"Don't you? You soon will, then. You know your wife's handwriting. Look at this." And she handed the letter written in answer to the announcement of her mother's death.

"The handwriting is somewhat similar," said Sir Clement, returning the letter, and beginning to think there was something strange about the matter; "but there is no signature. It may be only a chance resemblance."

"No signature! No; Cecilia was always too cunning for that!"

"Really, Miss——"

"Jones," interpolated Mary.

"Miss Jones, you must excuse me, but you must be labouring under some strange hallucination. Lady Wychwood's maiden name was Distin. When I married her she was the widow of Colonel Roston, and I am aware, for she has frequently assured me of the fact, that she has not a single relation alive. It must therefore be clear to you that you are mistaken."

"That is her story," said Mary Jones, quietly. "Now hear mine. Cecilia is the youngest of the three daughters of William Jones, a solicitor at Kemplitten."—Sir Clement started slightly.—"I am the eldest, the second married and died, and Cecilia eloped with Colonel Roston—Captain he was then—and went to India. She wrote very seldom, but we sometimes heard of her roundabouts, and always of being fast and flirting, and a good deal was said about a Captain Lauriston. When she came home to bring the children,

he came home the same time, and we heard Colonel Roston's relations were much shocked, and wouldn't receive her, for which I for one don't blame them. However, she was always most plausible and sweet-spoken; poor Hugh used to say she'd wheedle a bird off a tree, and father and mother believed all she told them, and thought she was mighty ill-used.

"Soon after she went back to India, poor father died, and then it was found his affairs were all in disorder, and there was nothing left for mother and me and Hugh. Jenny was married pretty comfortable, but not well enough to be able to help us. I will say for Cecilia, as soon as she knew, she promised to keep us; she made a great fuss about not being able to send much, still it was something, and what we should have done without it I don't know. Poor mother never would let us be brought up to put our hands to anything—she thought it wasn't genteel.

"Well, we had settled down, when Hugh—that's our brother—got into trouble: em-

bezzled money. He meant to pay every penny of it back, only took it to speculate with, but he was unlucky, the speculations all failed, and he was found out. I can't say but that his employers behaved pretty well; they said, if a guarantee was given them that the money should be paid in instalments as we could get it, they wouldn't prosecute. We didn't know where to turn for the money, but we promised, and mother wrote to Cecilia. Then it showed how much better she could have helped us if she had liked, for she at once promised to help with the money, and she did, and it is all paid off now. Hugh got a place in a draper's shop in Manchester; it nearly broke mother's heart to think of the disgrace of his being behind a counter. She felt she couldn't stay in Kemplitten, where it was all known, so we moved to Balham, and we kept back a little of the money Cecilia sent for Hugh to help us out. I wanted mother to write for more, but she wouldn't—said Cecilia was keeping her boy at some cheap school instead of sending

him to Eton, as his father believed, to help us—and she couldn't bear to be a burden, and all such nonsense, as if it mattered what school the boy was at. I wrote once, but Cecilia never liked me, and she wrote back pretty sharp that 'she was doing all she could and more than she ought, that not for worlds would she tell her husband about Hugh, and that, if we weren't satisfied, we'd better shift for ourselves.' Then mother got frightened that we should be left with nothing, and wrote to say it was all my doing, and not hers, and things went on as usual.

"Then came Colonel Roston's death, and some time after mother got a letter to say she was going to be married again to Captain Lauriston"—again Sir Clement started—"as soon as she got to England. It was to be a great secret until it happened, and I wasn't to know, but I read the letter when mother was asleep. Then we heard nothing more till one day a friend at Balham called in, and, 'Well, Mrs. Jones,' says she, 'your daughter hasn't

been long consoling herself; but how close you've kept it, and such a match, too—a baronet and all!

“‘A baronet!’ says mother—‘I never heard anything of it. How did you hear?’

“‘Why, it's in the *Times*,’ says she, ‘and I'll send it you in to see for yourselves;’ and there, of course, it was as large as life. Then mother wanted to write, but we didn't know where to direct to, till the same friend's husband recollected he'd been down once by an excursion train to see a friend in Limeshire, and he remembered Wychwood and told us. So mother wrote, and presently we got a letter from Cecilia from Paris, a long one, saying she was married very well, and would increase what she sent us, but it must be on the understanding that we never troubled or claimed her, that she did not choose that her husband should know that her brother had only escaped being a convict owing to the kindness of his employers, and that she had given another name, and told him she had no relations

living. Then, a little after, she came down to Balham. I was out, and didn't see her, but she told mother the money should be continued to me on the same terms—that is, that I never claimed relationship—and she paid off the remainder of Hugh's debt; but nothing would satisfy her but that he would leave England, and she got a situation for him in Melbourne. I'm bound to say he liked to go, and says he's getting on first-rate, still I don't see why he should be hunted out of his own country just for her fancies.

“Well, last Wednesday week I wrote to tell her mother had had a stroke, and on Thursday down she came, making a great fuss about the difficulty of getting away unperceived, and all the rest of it. Mother always cared more for her than for all the rest of us put together, and, though she couldn't speak or move, it was easy to see by her poor eyes that she was more than glad to see her. Yet, would you believe it, she wouldn't come down again—said she couldn't account for her ab-

sence, and a lot of rubbish of that sort. Then I put to her that anyway it wasn't right and fitting she should go gadding about everywhere—dancing by the side of mother's grave, I called it—and she just told me I was unreasonable, and couldn't understand, and that the girls had to go out, and, as she couldn't give the real reason for not going, she must go too. Of course it was all excuses—Cecilia never would give up a pleasure for anything.

“Mother died Monday, and she wrote me a very proper letter—it's the one I showed you. Then I saw, in a paper which I took up in a house where I was waiting to speak to some one on business, that Lady Wychwood was to give a ball to royalty on Thursday. I thought that was too bad—she could so easily have put it off—so I wrote and told her I had seen it, but I supposed she had put it off; and she wrote back—here's the letter, ‘My dear Mary, —Of course——’ Well, I didn't feel sure—Cecilia never was famous

for truth—so I bought a *Morning Post* yesterday, and, sure enough, the ball took place. So I didn't care what I did—she may stop my annuity or not—but I was determined to be revenged upon her, and so here I am, come to let you know the truth she was so set upon keeping from you.”

Mary Jones stopped, and looked triumphantly at Sir Clement. She was greatly surprised and rather disappointed that he had never interrupted her by a single syllable, but had sat, perfectly silent, with his penetrating eyes fixed upon her face. Twice certainly she had had the satisfaction of seeing him start slightly, but this was at points in her tale which had no special interest for her, and with which she could not trace the connection in his mind.

If she could have seen the workings of his brain, she might have been satisfied by the discomfort she had caused, though she would have been bitterly disappointed to find that there was no anger against his wife:

Sir Clement was certainly much pained to find that she had resorted to deception. He was the soul of honour himself, and hated the slightest deviation from truth; still he fully believed that she had been induced to do so by her love for himself: she had feared that, if he knew her true history, he might withdraw his offer. It was foolish of course—foolish and wrong—still a man is apt to be a lenient judge of a fault committed for love of him, and he forgave while he condemned her. Then the evident *animus* that inspired Mary told against her. She was so ungrateful for the help which he knew, from what he had learnt from Cecilia, it must have been far from easy to send. The only thing that gave him a positive shock was the assertion of the proposed marriage to Captain Lauriston. But then, perhaps, that might only have been an assumption of Mary's from something she had imperfectly understood, and which she herself confessed she ought not to have read. At any rate,

even if it were true, did it not triumphantly prove how thoroughly she must have fallen in love with himself to induce her to break off a positive engagement?

As he listened, all this passed through his mind, and, though he could not hardly disbelieve the strange tale he had heard, he resolved for once in his life to dissemble, and to declare himself unconvinced. For his sake his wife had concealed the truth, and had suffered, he felt sure, very acutely in being obliged to disguise her feelings at the loss of her mother. He now quite understood her pale looks, her nervous state, her mysterious fainting-fit; and she should never have the pain of learning that she had suffered in vain, if he could help it. He would express to Miss Jones his disbelief of her story, and never even refer to it to Lady Wychwood. But he would spare her feelings by taking her away from London, on the score of the delicacy of her health. Mignonette, he felt sure, would not be very

much averse to the change, and, if the other girls were very greatly disappointed, perhaps it might be possible to arrange for them to stay with Mrs. Cawthorne.

So after a long pause, when Mary Jones was fully prepared to hear him pour out vials of wrath on his wife's head, she was electrified by his saying coolly,

"Is that all you have to tell me, Miss Jones?"

"Yes," said Mary, quite taken aback, and wondering if he did not think it was enough.

"Then I do not think there is any necessity for our prolonging the interview."

"Why don't you bring Cecilia down?"

"Lady Wychwood is not very well, and quite unequal to the task of receiving strangers so early in the day."

"Strangers! Do you call her sister a stranger?"

"Of course not; but, as I informed you before, Lady Wychwood has no relations."

"Do you mean to say you don't believe me?" cried Mary, springing up, her face in a flame.

"I think your statement is not in accordance with facts known to me," said Sir Clement, who felt sadly ill at ease in his first attempt at dissimulation.

"But I tell you every word I have said is true; I insist on seeing Cecilia in your presence."

"You can insist on anything you please, but I shall not permit my wife to be annoyed or disturbed," said Sir Clement, calmly. "Look here, Miss Jones, it is no doubt a matter of money. Perhaps you are unaware of it, but in this story which you have constructed you have hardly placed yourself in an amiable light. You never seem to have been grateful for all the benefits which you say you and yours have received, though, by your own showing, they must have been bestowed at great cost to the person to whom you profess you were indebted for them, but al-

ways to have been hankering for more. Therefore I conclude your present visit means—money.”

“I did not come to be insulted!” exclaimed Mary, angrily; “I came to punish Cecilia for not paying respect to our poor mother by exposing her to you. I knew it was the only thing she’d care for, and now you—you won’t believe me!”

“Precisely.” Sir Clement bowed, but he felt his task of dissimulation a hard one. Nothing but his love for his wife, and his determination to save her the pain of knowing that he knew what she had so carefully kept from him, gave him strength to proceed with his task. “If,” he proceeded, finding that Mary did not speak, “you can assure me that you really have a brother in Melbourne, I will willingly pay your passage out there, and allow you £200 a year so long as you do not return to England or annoy Lady Wychwood.”

Mary looked at him sharply.

"You believe my story, or you wouldn't try to buy me off like that."

"Not in the least," replied Sir Clement, as calmly as he could, though he felt very guilty; "but I am quite willing to pay that sum to free Lady Wychwood from any chance of annoyance. She has not been at all strong lately, and I do not choose that anything should occur to disturb her."

"Not strong, and she out day and night!"

"Merely the usual routine of fashionable life, which you very possibly may not understand—at any rate, we need not discuss it. Be kind enough to tell me whether you accept my offer or not."

Mary Jones sat some minutes absorbed in thought. She could hardly set her ideas in order, so bewildered was she at what had occurred. Never had she dreamt of such a possibility as that her story should not be believed. She had imagined the scene so differently, had seen Cecilia shrinking in shame at her husband's discovery of her du-

plicity, and had gloated in anticipation over the humiliation of the sister whom she had from childhood disliked and envied. She had no proofs. Her mother had had an invincible objection to keeping letters, saying that they generally, if preserved, made mischief or sorrow, so she had really no scrap of her sister's writing save the two unsigned letters which she had shown Sir Clement, and which had failed to convince him. Cecilia had always refused to be photographed, declaring that she had tried once, and had been made so frightful that she would never run the risk again, so that there was not even that means of identification. If only she could have been confronted with Cecilia! But that, it was very clear, Sir Clement would not allow. Evidently she had bewitched him, as she had always seemed to do everyone in her girlhood at Kemplitten.

Mary had a shrewd suspicion that Sir Clement believed her story, but what good

would that do her if, to save Cecilia's feelings, he professed incredulity? She felt beaten and baffled at all points: she did not heed what Sir Clement had said about ingratitude, for she thought her sister might have done much more for her family, having no notion of the difference of requirements in the sphere in which she moved from that in which she herself lived; but she could see no means by which she could now carry out her wish to humiliate her handsome and successful sister. She had never once doubted her success, and had even been willing to give up, for the indulgence of her long-pent spite, her sole means of subsistence, which consisted of the annuity paid by Lady Wychwood. Perhaps in her secret heart she never quite believed that the allowance would be withdrawn: she doubtless fancied that Sir Clement, for the credit of the family, would not allow her to starve.

The point that she could not decide was

whether she should accept Sir Clement's offer and leave England. She had no longer any tie to the old country; she was very fond of Hugh, and would like to live with him, and she knew that he would be glad to have her: the only drawback was that it would, she knew, afford Cecilia immense satisfaction to know that she was out of England.

It was too mortifying to have come prepared to triumph over her sister, and then to find herself forced to accept the very terms that would be most gratifying to her intended victim. But still she felt her only wise course was to accept the offer, and she reflected that, if she held her peace and only told Cecilia that she was going to Melbourne, without narrating her fruitless visit to Sir Clement, she might continue to draw her sister's allowance as well as the two hundred pounds a year which he had promised. It is true it was very bitter not to let Cecilia know she had told all, but on the other hand it saved her the mortification of confessing

that her revelations had been received with polite disbelief. So, after a long pause, she said, suddenly,

"Yes, Sir Clement, I accept. I will go out as soon as you please. My mother—and Cecilia's—is to be buried to-morrow, and after that I don't care how soon I leave England."

Sir Clement moved to his desk and wrote for a few moments, then rose and placed a sheet of paper before her.

"Be good enough to sign that," he said, and Mary, glancing over it, saw that it was an undertaking to leave at an early date for Melbourne, and not again to annoy either Sir Clement or Lady Wychwood, in consideration of which her passage was to be paid and an allowance of two hundred pounds a year assured to her.

She signed it without a word.

"And for present expenses," said Sir Clement, who had been writing a cheque while she signed, "here is fifty pounds. Nay, no

thanks; our interview is at an end," and, ringing the bell, he opened the library door for her, and, almost without knowing how, she found herself on the pavement in Belgrave Square.

As Sir Clement returned to his writing-table, anyone who had seen him would have realized how deeply the interview had moved him. He was certain that Mary Jones' story was true, and equally so that she thought he believed it; but his chivalrous devotion to his wife had made him take the instant resolution to save her pain, even at the cost—great to him—of dissimulation; and he had been so occupied with this thought that some of the points of the story had not struck him, till he began to review them quietly after his unwelcome visitor's departure. Especially he recalled the statement that Wilfred was kept at a cheap school, while his father believed him to be at Eton.

It was the same accusation that had been

made in the letter he had received in Paris from the curate of Utterthwaite, and the reason why the boy had been deprived of his rightful advantages was now clear. Still he wished Cecilia had not so indignantly denied that his father had been deceived about the lad. Of course he understood her motive, but still he wished she had trusted to his affection, and told him all the truth: he would have loved her none the less. Well, of course she could hardly have known that. Still he wished her denial had not been so natural, so fluent, so spontaneous, for it made him feel a terrible doubt whether the other stories, which she had also denounced as fabrications, might not also have more foundation than he liked to think of. He remembered what Mr. Corbyn and Mrs. Hor-mund had said, and remembered that his wife had denied their accusations as to her conduct with Captain Lauriston neither more nor less vehemently than she had done the charge of having deceived Colonel Roston as to his son

being at Eton. Was it possible that she had been deceiving him, that there had been some truth in the stories respecting her?

He sprang up, furious with himself. Why should he doubt her? She had done wrongly and foolishly, certainly, in concealing her history and all that she had suffered from him, but it was so clear what her motive was. She had learnt to love him so dearly that she had dreaded the possibility of losing him. And if it were indeed true that she had been engaged to Captain Lauriston, what greater proof could he require of her overmastering love for himself? No—doubt of her was unworthy of him, he would utterly dismiss it.

But he must somehow arrange that she should not have the pain of going out, and thus keeping up appearances while her heart must be aching for quiet and retirement. And, as he was turning over in his mind the best method of accomplishing this, he saw Sir Caulfield Carluke's brougham stop at the door. Sir

Clement stepped into the hall, and begged the doctor to give him a few minutes before going up to Lady Wychwood.

CHAPTER IV.

None have accused thee ; 'tis thy conscience cries,
The witness in the soul that never dies ;
Its accusation, like the moaning wind
Of wintry midnight, moves thy startled mind.
Oh ! may it melt thy harden'd heart, and bring
From out thy frozen soul the life of spring !

MRS. HALE.

“**L**ADY WYCHWOOD has sent for you?”
said Sir Clement, leading Sir Caulfield
into the library.

“Yes,” said Sir Caulfield, somewhat surprised by this interruption. “Nothing serious, I trust?”

“No ; but, Sir Caulfield, I wished to speak to you. I have a reason—an excellent one—for knowing that Lady Wychwood would be

very glad to escape any more going out this season, but nothing will induce her to say so. Cannot you order her peremptorily to leave London?"

"You are certain she wishes it?"

"Perfectly positive; but I am equally so that she will use every effort to persuade you to let her stay."

"Well, forewarned is, as we all know, fore-armed. I will carry out your wishes."

But, as he went upstairs, Sir Caulfield could not help thinking the situation somewhat strange. It was very easy for him to see that Lady Wychwood's indisposition was on the nerves, and he was hardly prepared for the extreme vehemence with which she declared that it was absolutely impossible that she could leave London, or give up going out. She *must* go to a reception that very night. In fact, to her excited nerves, it seemed that to stay at home would be to excite suspicion, and she went on,

"It is quite impossible, indeed, Sir Caulfield,

there are the girls to be considered; not only my own girls, you know, but Miss Wychwood. I am sure Sir Clement would be dreadfully annoyed."

"On the contrary," said Sir Caulfield, slowly. "I happened to see Sir Clement as I came in, and he urged upon me that he was certain you had been doing too much, and required perfect quiet. He is quite right. I can prescribe no better myself."

"But it is impossible. We have engagements for every night for a fortnight at least."

"I cannot help it, you must break them. Indeed, Lady Wychwood, if you do not you will break down, and may very possibly have an attack of nervous fever."

Lady Wychwood felt as if it were quite possible; it almost seemed to her she had it already. Sir Clement could hardly know anything. If he suggested her giving up, perhaps it would be wise. But she said, peevishly,

"But I tell you, Sir Caulfield, it is not to be thought of—there are the girls."

"Perhaps something may be arranged for them; but, if not, it is surely better that they should miss a little amusement than that you should be seriously ill. I am sure Sir Clement thinks so."

"But I shall be all right in a day or two."

"Indeed I fear it will take longer than that. Your nerves are thoroughly out of order, and only perfect quiet can restore you. Have you had any shock or trouble lately?"

"No, no—nothing!" cried Lady Wychwood, in so excited a manner that he felt sure that she had something to conceal, and, coupling it with Sir Clement's observations, understood there was a mystery; "what should make you think I had?"

"I merely asked, as it might account for the serious derangement. Try this sedative, and I will see you again on Monday. Mean-

while keep perfectly quiet, and try only to think of unexciting subjects. Take a drive into a quiet part of the country, and go to bed early."

Sir Clement was awaiting him when he went downstairs.

"You were quite right; Lady Wychwood was most averse to my order as to quiet. Indeed she still says it is impossible, because of the young ladies."

"I will settle that. How do you find her?"

"Her nerves are in a strangely excited state; I asked her if she had had any shock or trouble lately, and she grew desperately excited. Quiet really is necessary."

"Yes, I quite understand. Thank you for enforcing it."

But when Sir Clement went up to his wife's room, having quite forgotten his engagement to take Mignonette into the park, he found that Sir Caulfield's advice had been by no means received as final. Lady Wychwood

talked very fast, and assured her husband that she felt much better, and should be quite well in a day or two: it was all nonsense Sir Caulfield wanting to shut her up, it would do her more harm than anything; and much more to the same effect. But Sir Clement, though he spoke very calmly and soothed her as much as he could, upheld Sir Caulfield, made light of all her difficulties about the girls, declared he would go himself that very afternoon to Mrs. Cawthorne, and altogether made it clear that she must resign herself to be quiet.

Lady Wychwood was puzzled; it did not seem at all as if he were suspicious, indeed he founded all he said upon Sir Caulfield's orders, still she was surprised to find him oppose her so determinedly. He had been hitherto so subservient to her wishes that it was a new experience to find him bent on doing her good against her will. But his determination carried the day, and, before the next week was half over, they were back

at Wychwood, Hilda and Ella being left in Palace Gardens.

Mrs. Cawthorne had extended a warm invitation to Mignonette, but she had not cared to accept it. All her exuberance of delight in London life had passed away. She still liked it much and enjoyed herself extremely, but she could never again have the unalloyed pleasure in everything she had experienced before she began to torment herself with the ever-recurring questions, "Had Edgar meant anything by his manner on that first night of their meeting?" and "Had she in any way betrayed her own feelings?" and it seemed immaterial to her where she was while Edgar was elsewhere. And yet it could hardly be said that she desired his presence, for the mere thought of seeing him plunged her into agonies of perplexity and shyness.

To a certain extent it was a relief to Lady Wychwood to find herself quietly at the manor. She had been as fond of her mother as it was in her nature to be of anyone but

herself, and it had been a painful struggle to her so completely to ignore her death, though it was one from which she never thought of shrinking. Then the terror that her overwrought nerves might betray her secret, which was rendered ever present by her "coward conscience," was a terrible trial, and one from which she was very thankful indeed to be relieved. But still, after a little, she missed the excitement terribly, began to find Wychwood dismally dull, and, inspirited by the fact that Mary had written her a curt letter announcing that she was on the eve of starting for Melbourne, revived wonderfully, and implored Sir Clement to let them go back and finish the season.

But to all her entreaties he turned a deaf ear. He conceived himself to be quite *au fait* of the situation, and imagined that she wished to go back for fear her secret might be suspected. That she found the country dull, and was miserable without the excitement and constant society to which she had

always been accustomed, never once struck him ; or that going back to London at present could be otherwise than most painful to her feelings. While loving her all the better for her courage in wishing to do anything to avoid a discovery which she believed would give him pain, he was determined that he would not permit her thus to suffer for his sake. And so, being himself perfectly happy and contented at Wychwood, he would not hear of returning to Belgrave Square ; talked of the delights of a summer spent in the country : and with the best and most loving intentions in the world did exactly the last thing his wife liked, while believing that he was tenderly consulting the secret wishes of her heart.

Hilda being absent, very little was seen of Clare. Mignonette went frequently to the rectory, but as the visitor of Miss Millicent rather than of her niece. She was sorry to see the change which had come over the dear old lady since the sad tidings of Ed-

win's disgrace. He had always been his aunt's pet, though she loved Edgar dearly, and well knew how much more estimable was his character; but Edwin from a child had had great powers of coaxing and persuasion, and had established himself as her favourite. Miss Millicent looked ten years older, and there was a sad look on her face that had never been there before.

All this struck Mignonette more forcibly than before she went to London, probably because of the longer interval that had elapsed without her seeing her old friend. Edwin, Miss Millicent told her, was living at Monaco, and, she feared, occupying himself solely in gambling. Clare was the only one of the family to whom he ever wrote, and his communications, even to her, were not very frequent. He represented himself as enjoying himself greatly, and as being what he called "very flourishing."

"It makes it worse," said poor Aunt Milly, with the tears in her eyes. "If only he

were sorry—if he repented what he had done, I think, in time, even his father might forgive him ; but he seems at present quite hardened. Ah ! if he were only like Edgar, who never caused us a sorrow in his life !”

If Edwin had only had some patience, and had not taken the coining of his fortunes into his own hands, it seemed as if the riches which he so coveted might have come to him. Dr. Barford just at this time had £100,000 left him by a very distant cousin, from whom he had never in the least expected anything, and of course Edwin would have shared with the others in the prosperity.

But Dr. Barford stoutly declared that not a farthing of his should go to his second son, while he led his present life, over and above the two hundred pounds a year, which was punctually paid him, “that he might have no excuse for leading other than an honest life,” and Edwin therefore saw himself

cut off from all hope of wealth from his father, unless he went through the form of professing repentance and amendment.

He said to himself he would do it some day—time enough to get himself re-instated in his proper place in his father's will. But the doctor was hale and hearty, and there was no use in giving up his present amusing life and going back to a dull and respectable one sooner than he was obliged. If only Mr. Cawthorne would die, leaving Hilda his money, he would claim his wife, and leave his father's fortune alone.

But the idea of Hilda was less pleasing to him than formerly. He lived now in a set where everyone was of the fastest, and he felt that Hilda, brought up as she had been, would be almost unendurably tame and dull. Still, if only the money were secure, he had not the faintest intention of losing his hold upon her, which he never imagined she would discover was illegal. If, after she joined him, she proved too dull to be borne with

he could easily amuse himself with others, and she—should have an establishment suited to her fortune. That was what women cared for most—besides, poor little thing, she was so desperately fond of him that being his wife would be happiness enough for her.

While he was calmly settling all this, Hilda, in Mr. Cawthorne's house, found it far from easy to keep Lord Willibald contented with her decision that he was not to speak to her again till October. Secretly and warmly encouraged by Mr. Cawthorne, Lord Willibald became more and more fervent in his love-making, and his devotion could not be concealed, for he was very demonstrative in public. People began to congratulate Mrs. Cawthorne, and by her husband's direction she answered that she believed it was as good as settled.

Naturally, the next week the society papers gave very broad hints as to a forthcoming fashionable alliance, and the third week in

June the *Morning Post* stated that "a marriage was arranged between Lord Willibald de Taureville, brother of the Duke of Rockshire, and Miss Roston, daughter of the late Colonel Roston, of Her Majesty's Indian Army, and step-daughter of Sir Clement Wychwood, Bart."

When she saw this announcement, Hilda felt desperate. Of course, Edwin would see it, and what would he say and do? She hardly knew why she thought it would be any better in October than in June; she could hardly have hoped that a person of Lord Willibald's consequence could be married without some announcement of the intended event appearing in the papers, yet certainly she had flattered herself that she might be safely married before Edwin heard any rumour of her engagement.

All hope of that being at an end, she was not so much dismayed when Mr. Cawthorne sent for her to his study, and told her he hoped now that she would behave sensibly and pro-

perly, and not "shillyshally" any more; that she ought to be ashamed of having kept Lord Willibald waiting so long, and that he was very glad there was an end of such nonsense. Then, as she tried to look indignant, and murmured that she really did not know what business it could be of his, he went on to say that it was now time that she should know why he took any interest in her, and proceeded to unfold his intentions as to making her his heiress.

Hilda acted very well, professed extreme astonishment, exclaimed how surprised mamma would be, and altogether acquitted herself perfectly in her *rôle* of unconsciousness. Of course, now the whole affair was known, there was no use in her struggling any further: she must wait and see what Edwin said, and do her best to disarm him, and she wrote to him in the same terms as usual, without any mention of Lord Willibald.

Very soon there came a letter from him.

"I wonder," he wrote, "you should not have

referred to the reports about yourself; you must be aware of them, for I see them in every paper. I suppose, however, you thought it waste of time to mention them, knowing that they cannot disturb me, as you are safely my wife. Of course that is so, but I am afraid you must have been flirting pretty considerably with Lord Willibald, and, as I don't like my wife gossiped about, you must really be more careful. Have you made any progress with old Cawthorne—I mean as to getting him to promise to leave you his money? You ought to have been able to manage it by this time; you have had plenty of opportunity."

Hilda's heart somewhat failed her as she read: he spoke of their marriage as so undoubted a fact. But then, as she reflected, that was of course; he wanted her to believe that she was his wife, so that he might have a complete hold over her. She believed she had quite assured herself that the marriage was illegal, but she could not help a feeling of uneasiness and terror. She wrote back a

letter full of plaintive surprise that "dearest Edwin" should doubt her. Of course she knew what had happened, what they had done together, as well as he did—why should he care for foolish gossip? She feared she had done nothing positive yet with Mr. Cawthorne, but, as Edwin knew, he was not an easy man to move; perhaps in time she might prevail. How she wished he could come back to England and be with her, and much more in the same strain, which quite set Edwin's mind at rest as to the possibility of her having any suspicion as to the legality of their marriage. He quite dismissed the subject from his mind till, a fortnight later, he received a letter from his sister Clare.

After some general information respecting the country and the weather she went on,

"The great interest here is Hilda Roston's engagement to Lord Willibald de Taureville. I foresaw it when he was at the manor last October, and now it seems they were engaged then, but she chose to wait a little. He is

very handsome and nice, but has not a shilling. However, they say that doesn't matter, as that vulgar old Mr. Cawthorne who was here the winter before last is her god-father, and is going to make her his heiress as she marries to please him. It seems he was bent on a lord, and encouraged Lord Willibald and Lord Penwarden. They say Hilda refused the latter, but I don't believe it; I'm sure she'd have accepted whichever asked her first. She is a vain girl, one who would give her ears to be 'my lady.' They will be going up soon, I believe, about the trousseau. Mr. Cawthorne has given her a most splendid set of diamonds. What luck some girls have, to be sure! I never could see that she was so wonderfully pretty; but then, to be sure, the money is everything to Lord Willibald, and they say Mr. Cawthorne would never have given her a sixpence if she hadn't married as he chose. Edgar writes that he is coming home; he has had a fever, is ordered change, and is 'home-sick.' I suppose, if he

told the truth, it means that he wants to come home and see about Reseda. Of course it would be a capital thing for him, and she's such a plain, little, insignificant thing that she's hardly likely to give herself airs."

In a postscript Clare added,

"Ella has just been here. Lady Wychwood and Hilda have gone up to London in the greatest hurry; Mr. Cawthorne was taken very ill, and they were telegraphed for. Only fancy if he dies without making a will! There of course will be an end of Lord Willibald, but she will still have the diamonds to the good."

This letter fairly amazed Edwin. Was it possible that Hilda could be playing so double a game, writing to him as her husband and expressing devotion, and yet calmly carrying on her arrangements for her marriage with another man? It seemed so; and, if such was the case, it was clear that she had discovered that the ceremony they had gone through was illegal, and his power over her was gone.

Yet it could not be quite gone, or she would not write so constantly and affectionately; and besides, poor little thing! there certainly could be no doubt that she was quite devoted to him: she had made no secret of it. Perhaps it was only a plan of hers to get Mr. Cawthorne to leave her the money, as he had so often urged her to do. He only hoped that she would be careful (women often were so dense about money or legal matters), and be quite sure that it was left to her without conditions. He would write her a warning letter, telling her all he had heard, and, assuming that it was all a plot, point out to her the necessity of caution.

When this letter was despatched, he kept turning the matter over and over in his mind. Perhaps it would be a good thing for him to go to England and see how matters were going on. It would not be necessary for his presence to be known to any but the two or three he wanted to see. Hilda would be like wax in his hands if he saw her; he

could hear from her how things were progressing, and mould her exactly to his will. The only thing that might induce him to discover his presence in England to his relatives, was the thought of his father's recently acquired fortune. In a letter within but a short time before, Clare had said,

"Papa seems quite unable to make up his mind what to do with the legacy; he says he wants a really good and safe investment. Of course if he were like anyone else, he would put it somewhere, meanwhile, where he could get interest for it. But he *isn't* like anyone else, and so the whole sum is lying idle at Goldbag and Money's."

Edwin hardly knew what his projects were as he read of this, but it seemed too bad to think of money lying idle that might be of such use to him. His luck was pretty good; with a little of that idle cash he might make a *coup* that would render him independent of Hilda and of Mr. Cawthorne for ever; then she

might marry Lord Willibald or wear the willow for himself, as best pleased her. The more he thought of that one hundred thousand pounds, the more he longed for a portion of it, and all sorts of wild schemes and ideas passed through his brain as to the means by which he might appropriate some of it.

Hilda had dreaded the effect of the intelligence which she was sure Clare would send Edwin, and was unspeakably relieved when she received his letter, assuming that she was only acting a part for their mutual benefit. If only Mr. Cawthorne recovered sufficiently for the wedding to take place in September, as was now intended, she hoped that it might be over before Edwin realized what her intentions really were, and that, when he found the deed was done, he would see that it was useless to say anything. Mr. Cawthorne was better, and she and her mother returned to Wychwood.

The news that Edgar was coming home had made Mignonette very silent and thoughtful. She hardly knew if she were most glad or sorry. The thought of seeing him again made her heart beat wildly with delight, and yet she dreaded it inexplicably, fearing to betray herself. She spent most of her time in the woods, in their old haunts, with a book in her hand of which she read but little, for she was always thinking how they should meet, what he would say, whether he would look at her as he had done that one night, at the mere recollection of which her cheeks burned and her heart throbbed, or whether he would only greet her as his old playfellow, as he had seemed to do all the succeeding days.

He had been very ill, so much she knew, and she envied Clare the privilege that would be hers of nursing him, with an intensity which would very greatly have surprised that young lady had she been aware of it. Nursing, or indeed any trouble undertaken for others, was very little in Clare's line, and she positively

disliked Edgar, because he never hesitated to tell her of her faults. If he had no better nursing than hers it would go ill with him, but happily there was Aunt Milly as a tower of strength.

The meeting, when it came, was unexpected. Edgar arrived a day before he had said he should, and the next morning, as Mignonette was taking a short cut to the rectory, feeling that, when he was once there, she could no longer run in constantly to visit Miss Millicent, she met him face to face. Her confusion was pitiable; it did not need much knowledge to tell him what her feelings were. Words that would have enlightened her as to his were almost on his lips, but he resolutely drove them back. Before he said a word, before he allowed himself the happiness of hearing her avow that she cared for him, he must open his heart to Sir Clement, must ask him if he would consent.

This was no ordinary case where a girl might well think herself insulted if her lover

dared to ask the consent of another before her own. It was not only that Mignonette was an heiress, that he had known her as a child, and might be accused of entangling her affections before she knew what love was ; but he had a mark against his name, his brother was unable to associate with gentlemen save under an assumed name. It was certainly a case where it was his duty to speak to her father first ; and, if he refused to listen, then Mignonette, his sweet Mignonette, who looked more lovely in her blushing confusion at his sudden appearance than he had ever before seen her, would be spared the pain of confessing the love he knew she felt.

Mignonette had a very confused account to give of their interview when she returned home without reaching the rectory, having quite forgotten Lady Wychwood's message to Miss Millicent. She knew Edgar looked dreadfully pale, and that he had said his native air would soon revive him, and—that there had been the

same look in his eyes as when they met that evening in Carlton Terrace, and—that was all.

CHAPTER V.

I have a silent sorrow here,
 A grief I'll ne'er impart ;
 It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,
 But it consumes my heart.

This cherished woe, this lov'd despair,
 My lot for ever be ;
 So, my soul's lord, the pangs I bear
 Be never known by thee.

The Stranger, Act 4, Scene 1—KOTZEBUE.

DESPITE his determination to speak to Sir Clement, it was some days before Edgar contrived to see him, and those days passed happily neither to himself nor Mignonette. He almost dreaded being alone with her, fearful lest his secret should escape him, and yet was never happy when she was out of his

sight. She was in such terror of betraying her feelings that, if she could do so unobserved, she fled at his approach, though the moment she had done so she longed to go back.

Sir Clement was by no means blind to what was going on, but he had a very wholesome dread of interference, and felt that it was far better that the crisis should occur naturally than that he should attempt to precipitate it. Of course it was not such a marriage as the world would expect his daughter to make, but he cared little for that so long as she was happy, and he was determined she should never, if he could help it, suffer as her mother had done.

Hilda's marriage was settled for the middle of September, and she and Lady Wychwood had been to London several times about the *trousseau*, returning each time with improved accounts of Mr. Cawthorne, who now expected to be quite well enough to appear at the ceremony. It was now the first week in

September, and some of the wedding-party had already appeared. Among the earliest arrivals was Lord Hexham, who had greatly missed Mignonette on the abrupt departure of the family from London, and who now scanned her countenance with anxiety. He was by no means prepared to find Edgar at Wychwood, and he watched the demeanour of the young people narrowly, but could not quite fathom Edgar's state of mind. Was he in love with her or not? If he was, did he mean to allow his pride to prevent his proposing to the heir-ess of Wychwood, when it was so clear—at least, to Lord Hexham's eyes—that she cared for him? If so, he was more Quixotic than young men in general.

Poor Mignonette's blushes and pointed avoidance of him showed too plainly what her feelings were; if the young man did not understand the signs, he was more dense than Lord Hexham conceived to be possible.

Hilda still wrote to Edwin of her marriage

as "her plot," and professed to be very confident of its success with Mr. Cawthorne. He wrote once to inquire what it was she really proposed to do, to which she replied hastily that the plot was far too complicated to be described by letter, that she was sure it would succeed, and that then he would know all, and would, she was sure, allow she was very clever. She congratulated herself extremely on having pacified him, when, two days before the wedding, she was horrified by receiving a letter from him saying he was in England, and should contrive some means of seeing her before he returned. The idea filled her with terror; if he cross-questioned her as to her "plot," what possibly plausible account of it should she give to satisfy him? Poor Hilda! she was firmly caught in the "tangled web" of deceit, and knew not which way to turn!

At length Edgar, happening to meet Sir Clement in the woods, determined to make the plunge and know his fate. He had more than

once started on his way to the manor to ask for an interview, but his courage had always failed him ; he was so painfully alive to all his own disadvantages, and knew that Sir Clement's answer would mean the whole happiness or misery of his life. But now, alone in the woods, the situation hardly seemed so embarrassing, and yet he hardly knew how to begin.

At length, almost in desperation at his own cowardice, he stammered out,

"Sir Clement, I am—so glad to—that is, that I have met you. I—I want to speak to you."

"Say on," said Sir Clement, greatly relieved that the crisis seemed to be arriving, for he had begun to think that Mignonette was growing thin and pale.

"I—I am afraid you will think me very presumptuous, Sir Clement, I am sure you will be very much surprised ; but—I love your daughter."

Instead of the astonishment and indignation

he had expected to see depicted on his countenance, Sir Clement put his hand on his shoulder and laughed.

"Surprised? Well, no; candidly I can't say I am. I have expected this for some little time. You are both tolerably transparent. When did you settle it?"

To find everything taken for granted, that Sir Clement raised no obstacle—nay, even concluded that everything was settled between himself and Mignonette without any reference to him so thoroughly astonished Edgar, was so utterly different from what he had expected, that for some moments he could not speak.

Sir Clement continued—

"So you really thought I should be surprised? Well! well! they always say lovers are like ostriches, and think no one can see what they fancy they hide."

"Indeed, Sir Clement," said Edgar, "I had not the least idea you suspected my sentiments. I have not dared to say a word

yet to Mignonette. I—I felt sure she cared for me, and I was determined that pain should never come to her through me, if I could help it—that she should not avow her love, and then find that the person she had chosen was unacceptable to her father. And how could I hope to be acceptable to you, Sir Clement? I know Mignonette is an heiress, while I have comparatively nothing. I feared you might think I had remembered this and endeavoured to engage her affections while yet only a child. But it is not only that—there is the stain Edwin has brought on our name.”

“You have not spoken to Mignonette?” said Sir Clement, in genuine surprise. “What do you think she will say to your taking anyone else into your confidence before her?”

“I think she will forgive me, even if you tell her,” said Edgar, with a smile. “The circumstances are peculiar. In honour I could not approach her without knowing that you

would not object to my doing so. I have put all possible constraint on my feelings in her presence, so as to appear merely as an old friend, but——”

“But not so effectually as to blind me, whatever you may have done her. Well, Barford, I must say you have behaved most honourably. As you say, there are peculiar circumstances; but I am not so unjust as to make you suffer for your brother's sins. You will lose the name, too; for Mignonette's husband must take her name. As to fortune—well, it is not what the world will call a good marriage of course, but, as her fortune is ample, there is no need that your want of it should distress you; and never, for worldly considerations, would I doom my darling to the suffering which her mother and I endured. That she loves you, I am sure, and you have my full consent to being happy as soon as you please. I will not tell her you have spoken to me. Does your father know of this?”

"No. I have spoken to no one but you. How can I ever thank you, Sir Clement, for all you have said?"

"By making Mignonette happy," Sir Clement replied. "It is all I ask of you."

"Would you wish me to give up my profession? Of course you will not like to part with her?"

Sir Clement paused.

"I will ask no such thing of you," he said, presently. "If Mignonette were to marry what the world calls well—that is, if she married a man of large fortune, with a place of his own, she would of necessity be much separated from me, and, in these days, Vienna, or even St. Petersburg, is not very far off. It is always a misfortune for a young man to give up the profession on which he has entered. I will leave you perfectly free."

"You are more than kind. I honestly confess I should be sorry, still——"

"I am glad to hear it. A man never

does much good in a profession which he does not heartily care for. And now I dare say you have had more than enough of my prosing, and are longing to go and find Mignonette. You take with you my best wishes."

As the young man left him, Sir Clement walked on with bent head, thinking of his daughter. How well he remembered the day when he had first spoken the words of love to her mother! It was on a soft, warm, autumn day very like the present, but, instead of the woods of Wychwood, they were spoken beneath dark cliffs hanging over a summer sea. He could smell again the salt freshness of the air, hear the soft lapping of the waves as they broke on the tiny strip of golden sand, up and down which they walked, as he told Mignon Vane that she was the only woman he could ever love, and she promised to be his wife. But then came sorrow and trouble, anger and separation; and when at length he won his treasure, it was but to lose her again, owing

to the undermining effect of those years of sorrow, when she had been forbidden to see or hear from him.

Well, thank God! he could guard her child from the same hard fate. Rather than she should suffer as her mother had done, she should wed anyone she chose, even if personally unacceptable to himself. And this Edgar was far from being; he had always liked him, and, indeed, cherished a friendly feeling for every member of the family except Edwin.

As he strolled along, he suddenly found himself at the very spot where Mignonette had fallen into the water. How narrow an escape it had been! and he shuddered at the thought of the possible loss of the daughter who was now so dear to him. How right recent events had shown him to have been in at once deciding that the younger Barford was a *mauvais sujet*, and not to be admitted to intimacy! It was much pleasanter never to have known him than to have to cut him now if they met.

And so, musing on many things, Sir Clement strolled on till he met Lord Hexham, and in the fulness of his heart told him of his late interview, little dreaming what a bitter blow he was inflicting. That a man like Lord Hexham, old enough to be Mignonette's father, should regard her with the eyes of a lover, never entered Sir Clement's mind; he would have laughed the idea to scorn if it had been suggested to him. He found Lord Hexham an exceedingly pleasant companion himself— younger a good deal than he was, of course, but still extremely congenial, and a man he was always glad to see at Wychwood; but he would have been inexpressibly astonished if he could have divined his companion's feelings as he walked beside him, listening quietly to his encomiums on Edgar. Lord Hexham was telling himself that he had expected this, that he had seen from the first what the end must be, and yet he was quite conscious that all along he had been hoping that, after all, he had been mistaken as to Edgar's feelings, and that he

only regarded Mignonette with the affection of an old playfellow. Well, the blow had come, and he must bear it as best he might in silence. There was, he knew, but little doubt as to what the girl's answer would be.

Meanwhile, Edgar did not find it an easy task to get speech of Mignonette. It only wanted now three days to the wedding; the house was filled to overflowing, and there was more than enough for everyone to do. It was very easy for Mignonette, who dreaded beyond everything being left alone with him, lest some chance look, or word, or tone should betray her jealously-guarded secret, to keep him at a distance. All the day through he was in her company, and yet never for one moment could he separate her from the rest. Now that he was free, at liberty to speak, this seemed almost more than he could bear. He was always on the watch, ever foreseeing an opportunity when it would be possible to whisper a word, to lead her off alone, and pour forth

his whole story in her ear. But in some way—how he could not divine—she always evaded him, and at the end of the day he was no nearer the goal than in the morning. Well, he and Clare were to dine at the manor—whatever happened, he would speak to Mignonette that night—would ask her to meet him in the wood, at their old trysting-tree, the next morning.

There was another of the party besides Lord Hexham who watched every movement of Mignonette and Edgar with anxious eyes, and that was Wilfred Roston. He had no hope for himself; he knew that Mignonette, kind and considerate as she ever was to him, had never once thought of him as he would fain have had her do. He divined her secret, and would have given up any most cherished hope of his life to insure her happiness. His was a truly pure and unselfish love, which could cheerfully sacrifice itself for the happiness of its object. He had been more than a little puzzled by Edgar's manner—at one

time feeling certain of his love for Mignonette, at another believing he had been deceived, and had mistaken friendship for love. But this day he saw a change, and, though it was the death-knell of any faintest hope he might have cherished, he was unfeignedly glad: he could rejoice at his own sorrow if it brought Mignonette happiness.

Though Wilfred's thoughts were naturally pre-occupied, he could not help being struck by something very unusual in Hilda's manner. Usually she was very calm and placid, but this day she seemed ill at ease, and was constantly glancing round as if afraid of seeing something unpleasant. Even when Lord Willibald was with her she did not seem at her ease, and exhibited a constant restlessness not at all common with her. He made some remark to her on the subject, and was astonished by the vehemence with which she declared that it was all nonsense and his fancy, that she was exactly the same as usual, and by the violence of her blushes at his

observation. The arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Cawthorne gave her an excuse for hurrying away from him, but he observed that, during the whole day, she still had the same scared, hunted look. However, he could not account for it, and found plenty of occupation in watching Edgar's endeavours to get Mignonette alone, while utterly blind to the flattering attention that Clare Barford was expending upon himself.

That night Edgar found himself next to Mignonette at dinner, and little dreamt that, for that piece of good fortune, he was indebted to Wilfred's good offices. He had gone into the dining-room with Ella, whose duty it was to superintend the arrangement of the flowers, and to see that the name-cards, on which Lady Wychwood insisted as "saving so much trouble," were properly placed, and, observing that his own seat was next to Mignonette, took the opportunity of removing the card and substituting Edgar's name.

When they sat down, Lady Wychwood at once saw that the people were not seated as she had settled; but it was too late to make them move, and she only thought it was a piece of carelessness of Ella's, and resolved to scold her for it. She really hoped Wilfred would have a chance with Mignonette. She had quite forgotten the fears which she had once entertained as to Edgar; he had not seemed to be specially devoted in London, and, now that he had come home, looking like a ghost after his fever, she never even thought of him as dangerous. Therefore her annoyance was not that he sat next to her step-daughter, but that Wilfred did not do so.

Mignonette gave one of her deepest blushes when she found who was her neighbour; she was glad and yet sorry, afraid of betraying herself, and yet happy at the mere fact of having Edgar next to her. She talked assiduously for a time to the gentleman on the other side of her, but Edgar waited patiently,

and at length succeeded in making her turn to him. At once Mignonette felt that there was a difference—what, she could not have defined; but it was more like that night in Carlton Terrace, when her heart had first throbbed with the hope that Edgar loved her, when she had just guessed what the feeling was she had so long cherished for him. And before dinner was over he had contrived to say to her, very low,

“Mignonette, I have been trying to speak to you all day. I want to ask you something.”

“What is it?” with a very vivid blush.

“You remember the old birch-tree hanging over the river where you were so fond of sitting?”

She bent her head. Remember it! It was far too much bound up with her thoughts of Edgar for it to be possible for her to forget.

“You remember? Then will you meet me there to-morrow at eleven? I have a great

deal I want to say to you, and it is so difficult to get you alone in all this bustle. Don't refuse, Mignonette," he added, quickly, seeing that she hesitated. "What I have to say is of the gravest consequence—to me."

"I will come," said Mignonette, in a very low voice, her heart throbbing so violently that she could scarcely breathe, and a mist coming before her eyes which made everything seem far off and indistinct. But after a little while she exerted herself to talk, and in a short time asked Edgar after his brother's welfare.

"I never like to ask about him at the rectory," she said. "Clare looks angry, as if it were somehow my fault, and dear Aunt Milly sighs so it makes my heart ache."

"Poor Aunt Milly! Edwin was always her pet," said Edgar. "I am afraid there is nothing specially good to tell. I had a letter from him to-day, though he seldom honours me with a communication. He is still at

Monaco, gambling, and apparently likely to remain."

"We are so sorry to see your father so aged."

"Yes, it has been a bitter blow to him. Mignonette, you will not forget to-morrow? You will not fail me?"

"No, I will not," she said, with a deep blush, as the ladies left the room.

It was a splendid moonlight night, almost as soft and warm as summer, and the windows looking on the garden had been left open. Mignonette felt that she must be alone for a few minutes, and stepped out on to the terrace. The formal garden lay below her, half in light and half in shadow, while glimpses of the river, silvery in the moonlight, could be obtained through the trees beyond. The air was heavy with the scent of heliotrope and jessamine, and of some belated flowers of the clematis.

Never in her life would Mignonette forget

that fragrance, nor the murmuring of the river in the perfect stillness. She paced slowly up and down in a perfect transport of happiness. There could surely be but that one thing which Edgar could have to say to her. She might dismiss the dread which had overwhelmed her of having given her love unsought!

When at length Ella called her in, Lady Wychwood having remarked her absence, Lord Hexham, who saw her re-appear, thought he had never seen a countenance so transfigured by happiness. He thought for a moment that Edgar must have been on the terrace and made his declaration, but recollected he had not left the dining-room.

That evening seemed to pass to Mignonette like a dream. She was so wrapped up in the delight of her own thoughts that she was hardly aware of what was passing around her, and could hardly believe it was eleven o'clock when Edgar took leave of her with a warm pressure of the hand, and a whispered re-

minder of their meeting on the morrow. When she reached her own room she sat down to dream ; but at length, recollecting a book that she had left in the library, determined to go and fetch it. She was, she felt sure, far too happy to sleep that night.

The quickest way to the library was through the haunted picture-gallery, which not one of the household would have entered after dark for anything that could be offered them. Mignonette, however, had no fears. She was not superstitious, and had amused herself in the long gallery too much in her solitary childhood to have the least fear of it now. She took no candle, though it was past midnight. She knew her way about the house blindfold, and was certain of the exact spot where her book lay in the library. She moved quickly and softly along the corridor, but, as she opened the door of the picture-gallery, a sight met her eyes that caused her to stop as if turned into stone.

The light of the full moon was streaming

through the gallery windows, staining the floor with the heraldic blazoning of the upper panes. The one window in the centre of the room, which communicated by a flight of steps with the shrubbery, and was always carefully closed, and protected with iron shutters at night, was wide open ; and on a sofa opposite one of the windows, with the full light streaming in upon them, sat Hilda and Edgar ! His arm was round her, her head rested on his shoulder, and from time to time he stroked her hair and pressed a kiss upon her brow.

Stunned, sick, bewildered, Mignonette stood for some minutes perfectly incapable of thought or action, hearing as in a dream the low tones of Edgar's voice, speaking caressingly to his companion, but gathering nothing of their sense. She had a strange, weird feeling of not being herself, but that unfortunate lady whose ghost haunted the gallery, and to whose picture she bore such a wonderful likeness. She seemed to have known, to

have gone through it all before; whether in some former state of existence or not she hardly knew, for all seemed as unreal as a dream.

But suddenly the couple rose, and as they moved Mignonette seemed to awake from her stupor. The whole misery of her position broke upon her, and, with one low, despairing cry, she fled back to her room.

Arrived there, and her door locked, she threw herself upon the bed, too miserable to weep, too wretched almost to think. Then Edgar had never cared for her after all! It had been her own vanity and folly that had made her think so, and she covered her face with her hands to hide her shame even from herself. She felt sure that she must have shown him only too plainly that evening what her feelings were. The delight of believing that she had not been mistaken had been too much for her self-control. She *knew* that Edgar must have seen what she believed

he would say on the morrow at their old trysting-tree!

What could it be that he did want to say to her that must be said alone? Of course now she must fail in her appointment; to keep it would be quite impossible! Yet no, that was cowardly. She would go, receive quietly and with interest whatever he said, in hope that he might thus believe she had expected nothing more. Of course he was as miserable as she. If he loved Hilda, as she could not, after what she had seen that night, doubt that he did, how wretched he must be that in three days' time she would be the wife of Lord Willibald! And Hilda, if she loved him—as she must to have met him at that time and place, she who affected such terror of the picture-gallery and its ghost—how could she possibly give herself to another?

It was all beyond poor Mignonette's comprehension, and, as she lay tossing from side to side, she became more and more bewildered.

ed and miserable. It seemed *years* since she had walked up and down the terrace in the moonlight, thanking God for the great and exceeding happiness in her heart. She could smell still the heliotrope and the jessamine, and the pain of remembering the happiness, intoxicating though so sadly brief, was so bitter that the poor child hid her face in the pillow, and groaned aloud.

When Mignonette rose—not from sleep—the next morning, she had aged by years. She was perfectly calm, still and pale, and perfectly determined to keep her tryst with Edgar, let what might come of it. She would show him that, whatever he might think, she had not expected him to propose to her.

CHAPTER VI.

That some mighty grief
 O'erhangs thy soul, thy ev'ry look proclaims ;
 Why then refuse it words ? The heart that bleeds
 From any stroke of fate or human wrongs
 Loves to disclose itself, that list'ning pity
 May drop a healing tear upon the wound.
 'Tis only when with inbred horror smote
 At some base act, or done, or to be done,
 That the reviling soul, with conscious dread,
 Shrinks back into itself.

MASON.

IT was a very lovely morning, the sun turning the lime-avenue into walls of sculptured gold, over which floated the faint veil of blue mist which always softens and beautifies a fine September morning. But to Mignonette's eyes the day was without either

brightness or beauty, everything looked dark and dismal, and she could hardly understand all that was said at breakfast as to the fineness of the morning, or the hopes that were expressed that the wedding-day might prove equally brilliant.

She looked with bewilderment at Hilda, who was laughing and jesting with Lord Willibald, and seemed as gay and unconcerned as was her wont. Could it really be true that she had seen her, but a few short hours before, receiving and returning the caresses of another man? Was it not rather some hideous nightmare from which she had not yet awakened? But no—all was too painfully clear and real. In no dream could the agony which she had felt at the sight of Hilda in Edgar's arms have been experienced; every nerve must be fully awake to render such torture possible.

Over and above her misery, she was conscious of a feeling of extreme surprise; Edgar had never seemed at all inclined to seek Hilda's society, nor she to care for him. Per-

haps they had met in secret ; but, if so, why ? There was surely nothing to prevent their meeting openly if they had chosen to do so. Mr. Cawthorne's secret had been well kept, and Mignonette knew nothing of the stipulations by which he had restricted Hilda's choice.

Both Wilfred and Lord Hexham were much puzzled by Mignonette's appearance. She sat with her back to the light, and made heroic endeavours to take part in the conversation as usual ; but no effort could prevent the fact that she was utterly miserable being discernible to such interested eyes. Both had believed everything to be as good as settled the night before, and had observed, with joy for her, but heart-ache for themselves, her radiant happiness ; what could have occurred in the quiet hours of the night to alter her so completely ? Neither knew the other's feelings, or they might probably have communicated their bewilderment ; but each observed her narrowly with ever-growing astonishment.

After breakfast Mignonette at once disappeared. She was determined, hard as was the task, to keep her appointment with Edgar, so that he might not fancy that she had believed his words to mean what it was now so sadly clear that they did not. She slipped out by a side door into the shrubbery, thus avoiding the garden, which was visible from the drawing-room windows, whence she might have been observed, and perhaps recalled. To be alone was of itself a boon, to feel that no eyes were upon her, and that she need not force herself to act a part, and to seem gay and cheerful when her heart was breaking. For it seemed to Mignonette—as it generally does to the young in their first great sorrow—that her trouble was greater than she could bear; that she could never survive the disgrace of having, as she feared, allowed Edgar to see that she cared for him, or the misery of knowing that all her hopes were vain, and that his love was given to another.

As she thought of it she paused. Was it

possible she could go through with what she had begun and meet him that morning? She almost felt that she could not, that she must go back; she had even half turned to retrace her steps, but the thought that the only hope of deceiving him as to her feelings was to meet him and hear quietly what he had to say gave her courage, and she pursued her way.

Suddenly, on the clear, still morning air, came the sound of the passing bell. Mignonette started; she knew of no one in the village who was seriously ill or likely to die; it almost seemed as if the bell were tolling the knell of the happy visions in which she had indulged only the evening before. She stood still and counted the strokes. Fifty-two. Who could it be? The only two sick people were far older than that. It gave a certain turn to her thoughts, and she was still speculating on who it might be when she reached the trysting-place.

It was just the appointed hour, but Edgar

was not there. This was a shock to Mignonette; she had so confidently expected to find him awaiting her, had so hoped that the interview would be quickly over, that it seemed almost more than she could bear to sit there quietly till he came. The spot was so full of memories; it had been her favourite tree, and the one where he had generally sought her on his return from school. The recollection of so many talks, grave and gay, which they had had there forced themselves upon her; it was there that he had put Tippet into her arms as a puppy—poor Tippet, who, now old and somewhat infirm, had followed her, and lay at her feet. She stroked his silky head; he seemed a part of Edgar, and the dog licked her hand. Poor Tippet! there was no doubt that he loved her, and she had the greatest difficulty in preventing herself from bursting into tears.

The time passed slowly and sadly, but still there was no sign of Edgar. When she had waited a whole hour, Mignonette rose and re-

traced her steps to the house. He had evidently forgotten all about her; doubtless his interview with Hilda had driven everything else from his mind. Well, she would be generous, and would not remind him of his appointment; if he had forgotten it, she would appear to have done so too.

In the garden she met Ella and Mrs. Cawthorne.

"Oh! Reseda, have you heard?—isn't it awful?"

"What is, Ella? I have heard nothing."

"Didn't you hear that dreadful bell?" asked Mrs. Cawthorne.

"The passing-bell?—yes, and I wondered whom it was for."

"For Miss Barford," said Ella and Mrs. Cawthorne together.

"For Aunt Milly?" said Mignonette, standing quite still, her hands clasped and her face white as marble. "Oh! it cannot be! Why, she wasn't ill—they would have told us so last night."

"She was murdered," exclaimed Mrs. Cawthorne.

"Murdered!" Mignonette shrieked — "but how?—she who never had an enemy!"

"It was burglary," said Ella; "they suppose she heard something, and went down to the study, and there Dr. Barford's *escritoire* was found broken open, and they suppose the burglar must have given her a blow on the head to prevent her giving the alarm: very likely he didn't mean to kill her. She was alive when they found her, but couldn't speak, and died about half-past ten."

"How awful!" said Mignonette, still standing like a statue, with her hands rigidly clasped.

One of her first thoughts had been that there was ample reason why Edgar had not kept his tryst.

"Awful indeed," said Mrs. Cawthorne; "but would you believe it? Sir Clement's first thought was that the wedding must be put off—'out of respect,' he said—but my hus-

band and Lady Wychwood soon showed him it could not be. Why, there's the Duke and Duchess and the bishop will be here this very afternoon—it wasn't to be thought of. And, after all, the Barfords are not relations: of course, Miss Barford can't be a bridesmaid, but that won't matter; an uneven number is every bit as fashionable."

Mignonette did not move; she hardly heard Mrs. Cawthorne. She was thinking that, if this had happened only yesterday, she would ere this have been on her way to the rectory, but now she could not go—not even in the presence of this terrible sorrow could she bring herself to face Edgar voluntarily.

Mrs. Cawthorne went on:

"Of course, it upsets arrangements a little, for the doctor was to have assisted the bishop, and now he'll have to do all the service alone, and Sir Clement sent off at once to stop all the village rejoicings, and the decorations and arches, and all that. I don't see why he should myself—there is no relationship; but still one

could give up anything not to have the wedding stopped."

At length the sense of what was said penetrated to Mignonette's brain and disgusted her; but she said nothing. Dear, sweet Aunt Milly! she would have been the first to wish that nothing should be altered for her, but Mignonette's brain almost reeled at the thought of what Hilda's feelings must be. As if it were not enough to be about to marry one man when, as she had such plain proof, she loved another, she would now feel that she was hurting her lover's feelings by celebrating her gay wedding within a few yards of the room where his beloved aunt lay murdered. It seemed to Mignonette that such a state of things must be unbearable, and she could hardly believe her eyes when she saw Hilda looking as placid as usual at luncheon, and heard her discussing the murder as composedly as any of the strangers of the company.

Immediately on hearing the news, Sir Cle-

ment had gone down to the rectory, and, when he returned, he was of course the centre of curiosity. He had, he said, only seen Edgar; Dr. Barford was too overcome to see even his old friend.

"Edgar looks as if he had seen a ghost," said Sir Clement; "it really is difficult to believe he is the same man who dined here in such spirits last night; he looks twenty years older. He says after he and Clare went home he sat with his father in the study a considerable time, talking over business matters. They went upstairs about one o'clock and he went to bed at once, and heard nothing till he was awoke by some noise. He went down to see what it was; the library-door was locked, but he got in through the dining-room, and found Miss Barford lying senseless on the floor close to the *escritoire*, which was open; the shutters were open, and the window, though closed, was unfastened. Of course they got help at once, but the poor old lady only recovered consciousness for a few mo-

ments, just before she died, and could of course tell them nothing."

"How much is gone?" asked Mr. Cawthorne.

"That is the strangest part of the story," replied Sir Clement. "Dr. Barford has a bad habit of keeping a good deal of money in the house, and there was two hundred pounds in the *escritoire* made up in *rouleaux* of twenty pounds each. Only two of these have been taken, and one blank cheque from his cheque-book."

"One cheque!"

"Yes; and, unfortunately, it was not observed at first. I say unfortunately because, if it had been, he could have telegraphed at once to his banker. It seems he has been extremely uncertain as to what investment he should select for that hundred thousand pounds which was left him a short time ago, and has very imprudently kept the whole at his banker's, instead of leaving it in consols while he was making up his mind. Use has

been made of the cheque, for, on telegraphing up just now, the answer was returned that a cheque for eighty thousand pounds was presented this morning."

"But of course it was paid in notes; they can be traced."

"I should think so clever a thief had changed them all long ere this."

Mr. Cawthorne was immensely excited; the abstraction of so large a sum was to him of far more interest than poor Miss Barford's fate. He harangued at length on Dr. Barford's folly in keeping such a sum lying idle even for a day, on the carelessness of not having at once seen that one cheque was missing, and on Edgar's supineness in not having at once started for London to trace the notes, and, if possible, convict the thief. And, while he talked loud and fast, Mignonette sat more and more bewildered. Edgar, whom she had always regarded as the soul of truth and honour, had, without doubt, told her father a

deliberate falsehood. He had represented himself as being at the rectory talking to his father from the time he and Clare went home from the manor till one o'clock! Now had she not herself seen him in the picture-gallery between twelve and one? Had she not thought how strange it was that she, who was universally recognized as being so like the unhappy Mistress Phoebe Wychwood who haunted the gallery, should have had an experience so curiously like that of that ill-fated lady?

She could not have been mistaken. There was no one else in the least like Edgar, except, indeed, his twin brother, and that it should be Edwin was of course out of the question. Hilda did not know him, and, even if she did, had not Edgar told her at dinner last night—last night! heavens! it seemed *years* ago!—that he had that day had a letter from his brother at Monaco? Scrupulously truthful herself, this false statement of Edgar's hurt

Mignonette keenly. It seemed as if there were nothing and no one left in whom she could trust.

Of course there was nothing either thought or talked of that day and the succeeding one but affairs at the rectory. Even the interest of the arrival of the Duke and Duchess, and of the Bishop, was quite swallowed up in the excitement of the inquest, and of the possible means by which the burglar could have become aware of the large sum which Dr. Barford had at his banker's. Various most remarkable hypotheses were started, and no one could think of anything else.

The day that intervened before the wedding seemed to Mignonette to be simply endless. She had begged hard to be excused from being a bridesmaid, but Hilda had murmured that it was very hard to lose another, and Lady Wychwood had said sharply that she "really thought Reseda might be more considerate. There was not a wedding in the house every day; and, besides, Miss Barford was no rela-

tion, it was ridiculous to make a fuss as if she were, though of course it was very dreadful, and all that."

So Mignonette said no more, and on the important day put on the white and scarlet uniform which Hilda had selected, and tried not to look more wretched than she could help. She was almost glad of the excuse of her sorrow for poor Aunt Milly; that was natural, and what there was no need to be ashamed of, whereas the real cause of her misery, the opening of her eyes as to Edgar's feelings, must be ever buried deep down in her heart.

The wedding, as everyone said, "went off very well," though probably they would have been rather puzzled to describe exactly what they meant by that comprehensive phrase; or how, unless either the bride or bridegroom had failed to appear, or had refused to say what was required of them—neither of which contingencies was probable—it could have "gone off badly." Hilda's placidity and calm accept-

ance of congratulations astonished Mignonette. Again and again she asked herself if it were possible she could have dreamt that agonizing scene in the picture-gallery, but her sense forbade her to believe such a thing possible. She *knew* that she had seen it with her waking eyes, and marvelled more and more at the part which Edgar had played, and at Hilda's smiling indifference.

She would have been astonished could she have known the relief with which Lady Willibald de Taureville signed her name as Hilda Roston for the last time, and felt that now she was safe, and that Edwin could do her no more harm. Now that she was safely the wife of another she entertained no fear that he would trouble her. She was beyond his reach, and he would waste no more time upon her. So she felt perfectly contented, and looked as happy a bride as ever the sun shone on.

Two days after the wedding was the day fixed for poor Miss Barford's funeral, and of

course Sir Clement attended, as indeed did almost every gentleman in the county. Dr. Barford looked very worn and shaken, but Edgar's appearance startled everyone. He looked as if years of sorrow had passed over his head, and seemed as if he could hardly bear to be spoken to. It appeared almost inexplicable that he should have taken the death of an aunt, shocking as the circumstances were, and dear though she was to him, so deeply to heart, and this was the remark generally made by those present as they drove away. Sir Clement remained behind the rest to say a few words of sympathy to his old friend, and, as he was leaving, Edgar followed him from the house, and asked if he might walk part of the way with him.

For some time, however, they walked on in silence, and at length, to break it, Sir Clement said,

"I am afraid, my dear fellow, your fever must have left you very weak. Even this sad business, shocking as it is, ought not to have

made you look so ill. Had you not better have some advice?"

"No, it is not that—I am well enough—in health," said Edgar, gloomily; "it is—I must—Sir Clement, you know all we talked about that day—when you were so kind to me—not a week ago?"

"You mean about Mignonette,—well, what of that?" said Sir Clement.

"You—you said you would not tell her what I said—that you would leave it to me."

"Yes—and so I have. I have not forestalled you," said Sir Clement, wondering what this had to do with it.

"I am glad of that," with a sigh of infinite relief; "it makes it easier. Sir Clement, I hardly know how to say it, and I cannot say a word in explanation; but I must give up my hopes—I cannot speak to Mignonette."

"Not speak to Mignonette!" exclaimed Sir Clement, in extreme surprise; "what does this mean?"

"I said I could not explain."

"But, my dear fellow, this is inexplicable! Not a week ago you told me all your happiness depended on my daughter. I gave you my best wishes; why did you not go to her then?"

"I could not find her alone. She had promised to meet me at our old trysting-tree the very day that—that it happened. I am thankful now we did not meet—it is better for us both. She will be happier for not having confessed the love which I do believe she feels for me, and it is a little less hard for me to go away than if I had heard what would have made me so happy—then."

Sir Clement was fairly bewildered, and, being so, was inclined to be a little irritable.

"Do be reasonable," he said, rather pettishly. "Am I to understand that, because you have had the misfortune to lose your aunt, you wish to recall all you said, not a

week ago, about your love for my daughter? I confess I cannot see the connection."

"Not what I said about loving her, Sir Clement," said poor Edgar. "God knows my love for Mignonette is a part of myself, and can only cease with my life. I know it must sound most extraordinary to you, and I repeat I cannot explain anything; but I cannot ask Mignonette to be my wife. If you knew——"

"It is all nonsense about your not being able to explain. You can trust me, and I must say I think your conduct is strange enough to require explanation."

"I know it must seem so to you, but it is as I say, Sir Clement: kind, good friend as you are, I cannot explain. What has come between me and my happiness must never be told; all I have to do is to bear my fate."

"It sounds very melodramatic," said Sir Clement, discontentedly; "and I must say it is hard. You win my child's affections, and

then tell me that, for some inexplicable reason, you cannot ask her to be your wife."

"I did my best not to win them," said Edgar, quietly. "Believing as I did that you might disapprove, I did my utmost to act the part only of an old friend. It was only when I thought I perceived that, despite my endeavours, she cared for me—not merely as an old playfellow—that I spoke to you. How thankful I was for your kindness then you can never know; that day I was happier than I dreamed it possible I could ever be. But now it is over, and I cannot tell you why—I cannot say one word in explanation. But I do ask you not to judge me harshly, and to believe me when I say that you see before you, perhaps, the most miserable man on the face of the earth."

Sir Clement was silent. His irritation melted away before the very serious trouble in which it was very apparent Edgar was; but he was too bewildered to know what to say. What mysterious event could possibly

have occurred to change the young man from an eager, hopeful lover, which he had been six days before, to "the most miserable man on the face of the earth," a character which he certainly looked to the very life? What could it be? And Sir Clement, apart from his concern about his daughter, felt an access of curiosity such as he had never in his whole life experienced before. There was no doubt that the young man had, or, at any rate, believed that he had, some insurmountable reason for what he was doing: it was impossible to look at him and not see that the decision, whether a wise and necessary one or not, had cost him very dear; but it was also clear that his mind was fully made up, and that he would not suffer a syllable respecting his reasons to escape him. Sir Clement felt as if he were being very ill-used, but yet, in face of Edgar's evident and unaffected misery, he could not find it in his heart to blame him.

There was a very long pause, and then Sir Clement said,

"Well, Edgar, I am very sorry. I had made up my mind to thinking my child would be very happy with you, and I am disappointed that you—that all is changed. I wish, too, you could have explained what, you must allow, seems very extraordinary; still it is *so* strange that I am convinced you have, or rather that you fancy that you have, some good reason for silence. If, at any time, it is removed, and Mignonette is still free——"

Edgar put up his hand with a gesture of pain.

"It can never be removed," he said. "Thank you again, Sir Clement, for all your kindness. I shall not see you again. I leave to-morrow for London, on my way to Vienna. My leave is not up yet, but I cannot stay here—I dare not see *her*—Mignonette at present. All I can hope is

that she will soon forget me, and be happy."

He covered his face with his hands for a moment, then wrung Sir Clement's hand, and strode away into the woods.

Sir Clement felt seriously perturbed as he sauntered slowly homewards. He was very sorry indeed for Edgar and his mysterious sorrow, but his chief concern was naturally for Mignonette. He was more observant than is the wont of fathers to be of the countenance of his daughter, and felt tolerably certain that she cared very much indeed for her old playfellow. He had noticed the happiness of her face on the night when Edgar had spoken to him, and had believed that all was settled between them, and that the reason why nothing had been said, and why his child looked so unhappy, was only Miss Barford's death.

But now it seemed he had been mistaken. Doubtless, though, Mignonette had quite understood what Edgar meant by his request to

her to meet him at the birch-tree, and that had made her so radiant. But then, why had she since seemed so miserable? And before he could answer that question Sir Clement found himself beside his daughter, who was seated at the foot of the old birch-tree, her face covered with her hands, and the large tears trickling through her fingers.

"My darling!" he said in dismay, laying his hand on her shoulder.

Mignonette sprang up in confusion. The path was so solitary she had never dreamt of being discovered.

"Dearest child, what is it? What makes you unhappy?"

Poor Sir Clement felt terribly like a hypocrite as he said this, believing that he knew too well what was the matter. He forgot, for the moment, that she did not know, as he did, of Edgar's intended departure.

"Oh! it is nothing, papa; only poor, dear Aunt Milly!—it is so terrible. How is poor Dr. Barford?"

"He looks, naturally, like a man who has had a shock. I am sorry Edgar leaves here to-morrow."

He looked earnestly at his daughter as he said this, and was surprised to see no change in her countenance. Indeed she said, very quietly,

"I thought he would go away at once."

Sir Clement felt fairly puzzled, and concluded that he had better leave matters alone; for he was so evidently in the dark that he was far more likely to do harm than good by meddling in them.

CHAPTER VII.

We might have been—but these are common words,
 And yet they make the sum of life's bewailing :
 They are the echo of those finer chords,
 Whose music we deplore, when unavailing.
 We might have been !

Life knoweth no like misery—the rest
 Are single sorrows ; but in this are blended
 All sweet emotions that disturb the breast :
 The light that once was loveliest is ended.
 We might have been !

Henceforth, how much of the sealed heart must be
 A sealed book, at whose contents we tremble ;
 A still voice mutters 'mid our misery,
 The worst to bear, because it must dissemble.
 We might have been !
 L. E. L.

SOME members of the party, the duke and
 duchess and others of Lord Willibald's

relations, the bishop, and one or two more left Wychwood the day after the wedding, but some of the guests remained; among them, Lord Hexham, and Mr. and Mrs. Cawthorne.

Lord Hexham was completely puzzled by the apparent change in Mignonette's affairs. It was very plain to him that the girl was miserable, and yet why should she be so after what Sir Clement had told him of his conversation with Edgar? It was incomprehensible, and when he heard accidentally from Ella, who had been down to see Clare, that Edgar had started for Vienna, he was more than ever bewildered.

Had he spoken to Mignonette, and had she refused him? That was hardly consonant with her look of brilliant happiness on the night when his manner to her changed, after his conversation with her father; and besides, it would not account for her look of intense wretchedness now, which was clearly visible to his interested eyes, though he also saw how

earnestly she strove to conceal it, and to appear as usual.

At length his anxiety to understand what was going on grew so intense as to be no longer endurable, and he took the opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* walk with his host to refer to what he had told him respecting Edgar.

Sir Clement was far from sorry to have such an opening for talking over what Edgar had said to him. The more he thought about it, the more incomprehensible it appeared, and he was really glad to hear what some one else's opinion on the subject might be. Instinctively he had never mentioned the subject to his wife. He would have been quite unable to give any reason for his silence, and was certainly entirely innocent of her wishes respecting Wilfred; but he had not once referred to Edgar's hopes, or his subsequent retraction, and Lady Wychwood knew nothing whatever respecting them. He hoped that another mind might throw some light on what was, to him, so extremely perplexing.

But it was evident that this light would not come from Lord Hexham, who was fully as bewildered by the state of affairs as his host. The more they talked it over, the less comprehensible it became. Lord Hexham suggested the possibility that the loss of so large a portion of Dr. Barford's recent fortune might have something to do with it, but it was rather for the sake of suggesting something than from believing it to be the real reason ; for, as both gentlemen agreed, the question of money had been too completely disposed of at the time of the first conversation for the robbery to have had anything to do with the matter. No, it remained a mystery, and nothing they could say seemed to throw any light upon it.

When he was once more alone, Lord Hexham's thoughts naturally turned to how this might affect his own hopes. The more he saw of Mignonette, the more devoted he became to her—the more he longed to make her his own. When he heard that Edgar had spoken to Sir Clement, he had despaired, for he had no

doubt what her feelings were ; but now that her lover had disappeared so mysteriously, without a word, and with an expressed thanksgiving that he had not spoken to her, might not her sorrow and her mortification work to his own advantage ? Lord Hexham told himself that to possess Mignonette would be such an unspeakable joy that he would hardly be particular how he acquired it. If only she were once his, he would so adore her, so encompass her with all sweet observances, that in a very short time she must forget this childish passion, and love him very dearly.

Perhaps there never yet was a man who did not believe that he could make any woman who was once married to him adore him ; but, unfortunately, the belief is not invariably borne out by facts.

Would her disappointment as to Edgar incline Mignonette to listen favourably to another suitor ? This was the question that Lord Hexham debated with himself as he wandered

about the woods after his interview with Sir Clement. Should he try his fate now, or should he wait? He could not decide which course afforded him the best chance of success. At this moment Mignonette must presumably be mortified by Edgar's sudden desertion, more especially as, during that one evening, he had ostentatiously devoted himself to her, and had even made an appointment with her for the ensuing day, which, owing to circumstances, had never been kept. She might be anxious to revenge herself upon him, to show him that others valued what he had despised, and might willingly engage herself to some one else with this view. It was certainly not a flattering reason for acceptance, still Lord Hexham felt he would gladly take Mignonette on any terms, trusting in a very short time to make her utterly forget her former lover.

But on the other hand it might be the very worst time to speak to her: she might be so unhappy, so heart-sick at her loss, as to be impossible to persuade that she might love

.

again, and might even ultimately rejoice at what now rendered her so wretched. Either of these states of mind was possible; as to which was the most probable, Lord Hexham walked about the woods the entire afternoon endeavouring to decide. When at length he returned to the house, he was no nearer a decision than when he started, and was strangely absent and *distract* all the evening, watching Mignonette's every movement, and building thereon all sorts of contradictory theories and possibilities.

After two days similarly spent, he determined to ask Lady Wychwood's counsel. When he had spoken to her before on the subject of his admiration for Mignonette, it was with a certain ill-defined apprehension that she would be offended at his having transferred his homage from herself, and he would certainly not have approached the subject, if she had not begun it by requesting him not to make the girl conspicuous. But she had dissembled her real feelings so well as to

relieve him of any apprehension on that point; indeed he had been conscious at the time of a slight mortification at feeling how little she seemed to feel his defection, and he therefore felt not the slightest scruple in asking her counsel in his embarrassment.

In their former conversation they had been completely at cross-purposes, he referring to Edgar and she to Wilfred, and he therefore never for a moment doubted that she knew all about Edgar's love affair; indeed he thought anyone must have been blind who did not observe how matters stood between the young people. But then he did not know that Lady Wychwood believed herself to see something quite different, and that nothing more surely blinds the eyes to what is really passing before them than the imagination that something of a totally opposite nature is occurring. So persuaded was he that Lady Wychwood knew as much as, if not more than, he did himself that it was some time before they understood each other when he

found her alone the day after he had determined to consult her.

"Reseda looking unhappy?" said Lady Wychwood, in a tone of surprise. "I don't notice anything. Why should she?"

"Well, this strange and sudden departure of her lover."

"But it had always been settled when he was to go, and there is surely nothing strange in his going back to his work."

Wilfred had left Wychwood the previous day, and his mother imagined that he was the person referred to.

"Well, yes, of course it was known he would go back, but not so soon; and besides, what he said to Sir Clement before he went was so strange."

"Strange! Said to Sir Clement! Wilfred! What do you mean?"

"Wilfred!" exclaimed Lord Hexham, in surprise. "What has he to do with it?"

"Why, you were talking of him."

"Not I! I was talking of Edgar Barford."

"And pray what has *he* got to do with Reseda?"

"Do you mean to say," said Lord Hexham, in extreme surprise, "that you have been blind to the fact that they love each other?"

Lady Wychwood was silent. She was vexed that anything should have escaped her eyes, and, by the certainty with which Lord Hexham spoke, it appeared as if this must have been very evident. So she answered, in a careless manner,

"I fancy you are quite mistaken. Of course they were friends when Reseda was a child and he was a schoolboy, but there has never been what you call 'anything' between them, fortunately, I am sure, for of course Sir Clement would never hear of such a thing."

"Do you mean to say you do not know—that he has not told you?"

"Told me what? I do wish, Vere, you

would speak out plainly what it is you mean, and not go on being mysterious."

Lord Hexham felt unspeakably annoyed that he had said a word about the matter. Evidently Sir Clement had not told his wife what had occurred, and he felt guilty of a breach of confidence. It was most annoying, still he knew Lady Wychwood far too well to hope for one moment that she would be satisfied now without understanding the matter thoroughly, and he thought it was more advisable that she should hear it from him, and not be impelled to cross-question her husband. So he told her all he knew himself, observing, at the end of his narrative, that it had never once occurred to him that she did not know all about it.

"Why," he continued, "when we last spoke on the subject in this very room, you advised me not to hope, because you thought her heart was touched, and that of course it was not a good match, still her father would not oppose it."

"But I was not thinking of Mr. Barford."

"Of whom then?"

"Of my son—of Wilfred."

"Of Wilfred!" Lord Hexham exclaimed, in extreme astonishment. "Why, they are very good friends of course, but she is not in the least in love with him."

"Pray how can you tell that?"

Lady Wychwood spoke pettishly. She was afraid what Lord Hexham said was only too true, and was angry that another should have been more clear-sighted than she.

"Because I am in love with her myself," he said, very quietly. "If I had not been, I should probably never have fathomed young Barford's feelings, nor her reciprocation of them. 'A fellow-feeling,' you know, 'makes us wondrous kind.' But I should never have troubled you about the matter if I had not felt the need of your advice. Will you help me?"

"What do you want advice about?"

"You know how I love Miss Wychwood." If he had been looking at her he would have seen how Lady Wychwood's face changed, and how spiteful and malevolent she looked, but he was looking straight before him, and not thinking of her at all. "She is my exact ideal of all that a girl should be, and if only I could win her I should be the happiest of men."

A long pause, and then Lady Wychwood asked, coldly,

"And pray how do you expect me to help you?"

"I want you to tell me what you think. You know a girl's feelings better than I of course can do, and you must also know Mignonette's individual character. Which will give me the best chance: to speak to her now, when she must be mortified by her lover's desertion at the very moment when she had, of course, cause to imagine that he was about to speak; or to wait till she has recovered from the shock, and has learnt to feel that life is

not altogether at an end for her, as she doubtless feels it to be at present."

"Do you mean to say you would marry her, if you knew she only accepted you because she was disappointed, and could not marry somebody else?"

"I would marry Mignonette Wychwood in any way in which I could without doing violence to her feelings. I would never ask why she accepted me, and I would love her so well that in a very short time she should not be able to help loving me. I would never say a syllable to her of what had gone before, never profess to know that I was not her first love, unless, indeed, she told me her story herself."

"How very romantic!"

Lady Wychwood could not restrain a sneer, but Lord Hexham was too interested in his theme to perceive it.

"It may be romantic, but I mean it," he said. "I have never before seen anyone like her, and I would give all I possess to have her

for my own. It cannot be that a girl's life can be ruined by one unhappy love-affair such as this. She must be able to love again, perhaps all the more deeply because she has known sorrow. But I do not want to bore you with my rhapsodies, only tell me what is the wisest course for me to pursue. Shall I go away and leave her time to forget all this, and not approach her till she has had time to recover from what has doubtless been a severe blow; or shall I speak to her now, in the hope that she may accept me as a means of obtaining forgetfulness?"

"You mean to say you would be satisfied with that?"

"I have told you I would be gladly satisfied with anything that gave her to me. Once mine she must, she shall love me. I only ask you which course you think the wisest."

Lady Wychwood sat silent for some minutes, earnestly debating the question just proposed to her. It was her great object to pre-

vent the possibility of a marriage between Lord Hexham and Mignonette, as it must infallibly enlighten Sir Clement as to his identity with Vere Lauriston. She was as anxious to decide clearly what course would be most advantageous to him as he could possibly be, but only that she might advise him to pursue the other. She gave the subject the most anxious consideration.

She had but a very imperfect knowledge of Mignonette's character; for the girl was too simple and straightforward for her step-mother to believe it possible that she was exactly what she seemed.

Lady Wychwood judged others by herself, and always suspected hidden motives. Would Mignonette be more likely to accept Lord Hexham from motives of pique and pride now that she had just lost her lover, or to be won by his persuasions when some little time had past, and she had got over "her disappointment"? Lady Wychwood felt sorely puzzled. If it had been one of her own

daughters, she would have felt quite certain that pique was the best thing to rely upon, but Mignonette was different. She could not feel sure—no, on the whole, she thought that Lord Hexham would have less chance now than in some months time; so, just as he was becoming very impatient, she said, slowly,

“It is a difficult thing to advise. Reseda is of a secretive nature, and has never confided in me—as you may guess from the fact of my being so completely unaware of this affair with young Barford—but I fancy that your best chance is to speak at once. Of course you must not give the slightest sign of knowing what has passed, or of having observed her unhappiness. Indeed, I rather think you exaggerate that. I had not perceived it.”

“No, I do not exaggerate; it is plain enough. And you really advise me to try my fate at once? I am glad. It is what I myself fancied would be the most hopeful

plan; but I am glad to have your opinion : you must know best."

He would have been not a little astonished had he known how Lady Wychwood hated him at that moment. She was a woman who could not endure not to be pre-eminent. Both in her youth at Kemplitten, and in most of the Indian stations at which she had lived, she had been undeniably the most beautiful woman wherever she appeared; and though her looks were now fading, and had deteriorated considerably during the past year, she was herself totally unconscious of the fact, and expected to command the same homage as ever. But that Vere Lauriston, as she still called him to herself—that he, who had been for so many years her slave, should renounce his allegiance, and even expect her to be his confidante and adviser as to his new flame, was absolutely unendurable!

It was an insult greater than she could bear! Even if it had not been of such vital importance for the preservation of her secret

that Mignonette should refuse him, she would still have done everything that lay in her power to ensure his rejection. She longed that he should be pained and humiliated by a refusal. Having known her, to turn to a chit like Mignonette! It was too much! And Lady Wychwood absolutely shed tears of anger and mortification.

Mignonette had felt no surprise at Edgar's abrupt departure; indeed it had seemed to her most natural that he should be anxious to leave Wychwood. Neither was she surprised at his never having sought the interview with her, which his aunt's murder had prevented from taking place at the time appointed. As it could clearly not have been what she had believed and hoped, it could not have been anything of any importance, and it was only natural that he should have forgotten all about it. It was true that hitherto he had never left the rectory without coming to wish her good-bye; but then, between this terrible occurrence and his own sorrow about Hilda,

his mind had of course been too full for him to remember her. How sorry she was for him! How could Hilda, as she had won his love, have preferred that comparatively uninteresting Lord Willibald? It was more than she could understand.

But how had she and Edgar learnt to love each other? That puzzled Mignonette more than anything. Their opportunities had been so few; when he had been at Wychwood at the time of the skating, he had always been with her and Wilfred, and sometimes Ella, never with Hilda. Then in London he had never appeared to talk much to her; she had always seemed to be preoccupied with Lord Willibald or Lord Penwarden. Still she had seen them with her own eyes as undoubted lovers in the picture-gallery. It was strange, nay, incomprehensible, yet nevertheless an undoubted fact. The more she mused over it the more bewildering it became; but naturally she could think of little else.

It was a day or two before Lord Hexham

could find the opportunity he so ardently desired of speaking to Mignonette. It was not that she avoided him—no suspicion of his intention had ever crossed her mind; she liked him exceedingly, better indeed than the majority of the young men she knew, who could talk only of their hunting, or shooting, or racing, and wondered that she was not more enthusiastic about lawn-tennis. But she was generally occupied with the entertainment of such guests as were left, and it was not till the third day after his conversation with Lady Wychwood that he met her coming back from the rectory, where she had been paying a visit of condolence to Clare.

It had not been a pleasant interview. Clare had of course been shocked by her aunt's murder, but she had never been fond of her, and had always resented Dr. Barford's fiat that she, and not her niece, was to be the mistress of the house. Her dislike to Mignonette, and her knowledge that the latter had loved gentle Aunt Milly very dearly, had in-

duced her to say even more than she really meant about "the relief of now for the first time being in her proper place, of being mistress in her own house."

Mignonette did not answer these speeches; she knew it was always useless to remonstrate with Clare, and only hoped that such remarks were made with the object of paining her, rather than because they were really meant. But the interview had saddened her, and she was looking very melancholy when Lord Hexham met her.

He turned and walked beside her, and, without any preparation, began what he had to say.

"I am fortunate to meet you, Miss Wychwood. For the last three days I have been trying to find you alone."

"To find me? But surely we have been always together?" said Mignonette, in genuine surprise.

"Together—yes, but not alone. I have that to say—Miss Wychwood, I do not know

if I shall surprise you, or if you have guessed my secret; but I love you very dearly. Will you make me the happiest of men? will you be my wife?"

There could be little doubt of the genuineness of Mignonette's surprise; she fairly gasped with astonishment.

"You—you love me!" she exclaimed, standing still and looking him straight in the eyes.

"Yes," he answered, gravely, "I do with all my heart. If you will be mine, it shall be the one object of my life to make you happy—I shall be devoted to you. Even if you cannot say you love me now, do but marry me, and my love is so strong, it must, it shall compel yours."

Mignonette drew back a step: he had unconsciously advanced.

"It is wrong to marry without love," she said, gravely; "and, Lord Hexham, I like you very much—better, indeed, than almost anyone I know—but I do not love you."

Poor child ! perhaps she had never been so painfully aware of how much she loved Edgar as at that moment.

“You do not now—the idea is new to you. I am, I know, far older than you, but my heart is none the less warm for that. I do not ask for your love all at once—that will come—it must !”

There was a pause. For a moment Mignonette allowed herself to entertain the idea. To be loved as Lord Hexham professed to love her would be very sweet : to be first with anyone would be delightful. Of course, her father loved her very dearly—of that she never doubted—but naturally his wife must be first with him, not his daughter. For a moment she allowed herself to think of this, to wonder if it would not be possible to learn to forget Edgar, who had evidently never thought about her, and to teach herself to love Lord Hexham, as he assured her she could so easily do. The idea was tempting, but only for a moment ; the next she put it away from her. It was

impossible! Although Edgar did not care for her, she could never care for anyone else: she would never do any other man the wrong of accepting a love which she could not return. So she shook her head.

"No, indeed, Lord Hexham, it cannot be; love does not come at call, as you fancy it does. I should be doing you a great wrong if I did what you wish, and I should be very unhappy myself."

"Mignonette, have no fear for me. I would rather have your mere liking than any other woman's love. And, for yourself, you *should not* be unhappy. I would take good care of that."

"You would do all in your power, I know," she said, gently disengaging her hands, which he had caught in his eagerness, "but to prevent it would be beyond your strength. I should be unhappy because I should be doing wrong. Oh, do believe me!" she cried, passionately, as he again essayed to speak. "I know what I am saying, and I really mean it."

I cannot love you, and I will not marry you. Why should you give me the pain of saying so again? For it *is* pain. I like you better than any of my friends, but oh! liking is not love."

"One may grow into the other, dear."

"No, not if——" and she stopped. She had almost said, "if one's love is already given to another."

Lord Hexham understood what was left unspoken, but he took no notice of the broken sentence.

"Then will you give me no hope, Mignonette? Let me come to you in a year, in two years—when you will,"

"It would be no use," she said, gently. "I am sorry, very sorry this has happened, but I shall never change. Forget me as soon as you can—it is best."

"But impossible, dearest. Well, Mignonette, I will say no more now but this: Promise that, if ever you change, you will let me know."

"I will promise," said Mignonette, reluctant-

ly, "if you wish it very much, but indeed it is of no use."

"Thank you, dear," he said, and took her hand in his, pressed it to his lips, and walked away from her into the least frequented portion of the woods.

CHAPTER VIII.

There is no strange handwriting on the wall,
 Thro' all the midnight hum no threatening call,
 Nor on the marble floor the stealthy fall
 Of fatal footsteps. All is safe. Thou fool,
 The avenging deities are shod with wool.

W. ALLEN BUTLER.

Dishonour waits on perfidy. A man
 Should blush to *think* a falsehood: 'tis the crime
 Of cowards.

JOHNSON.

LORD HEXHAM was disappointed, but not utterly disheartened. He only thought that both he and Lady Wychwood had been mistaken in their idea that pique and pride might cause Mignonette to accept him. Well, he was sorry, but he would have patience,

and would try again when time had healed the wound which her heart had just received. She could not always go on caring for Edgar, if she did not see anything of him, and then why should there not be hope for him?

Inspired by these thoughts, he did not, as he had at first intended, bring his visit to an abrupt conclusion. It would be more for his own interest, he thought, that the girl should imagine that, while taking her answer as final, he yet wished to remain her friend. The more frequently she saw him, the more likely, he thought, she was to get used to the idea, and ultimately to accept him as her husband.

Lady Wychwood feigned a surprise she was far from feeling when Lord Hexham told her of the result of his wooing; and, though his intention of trying his fate again was far from pleasing to her, she encouraged him warmly, relying on her own diplomacy before the time came to render his hopes abortive.

She advised him to say nothing to Sir Clement, declaring that he would be sure to talk to Mignonette on the subject, and that then—whatever she might wish to say at a future time—she would be ashamed to change her mind. It was better that she should believe it to be a profound secret between them.

Mignonette had been profoundly astonished by Lord Hexham's proposal. She had thought of him as a friend of Sir Clement and Lady Wychwood rather than as one of her own contemporaries; besides, she was by no means a girl who, despite all the admiration she had received, was inclined to fancy people were in love with her. She was extremely sorry it had occurred. She liked him very much indeed as a friend, and feared that now all their pleasant *camaraderie* would be at an end. It was a great relief to find him talking to her as usual, and, above all, not to hear that he was going to leave before

the time originally appointed for the termination of his visit.

She had quite dreaded his abrupt departure, fearing that its cause must be apparent to everyone; and, in her pleasure at finding that her fears were not realised, she talked to him with almost all the ease of her former manner. There was a difference, of course, but it was apparent only to him, and she never dreamt that there was any further danger. Had she not given him her answer? And with Mignonette to say a thing was to mean it always. Perhaps the lingering pressure of Lord Hexham's hand, as he at length took his departure, somewhat startled her, but she re-assured herself by the thought that it was only the expression of the interest he must feel in her, as he had wished to make her his wife.

To Lady Wychwood and Ella life seemed very dull when the party had at length dispersed. They were vexed that Sir Clement

resolutely refused to give a ball that winter, and thought his reason, "that it would be disrespectful to the trouble at the rectory," very "absurd and far-fetched." Both welcomed with eager delight Lord Hexham's invitation to spend Christmas in Northumberland, and even Mignonette, though quite contented at home, felt a curiosity to see the magnificent place of which she had heard so much from Hilda.

She was quite innocent of any idea that Lord Hexham wished to show her the magnificence of his home, either to make her regret her refusal or to induce her to reconsider it. She wondered a little sometimes why he showed everything so markedly to her, and made such a point of her seeing and giving her opinion about everything connected with the place; but she accounted for it by the many talks they had had together about mediæval architecture, of which Hexham Castle was one of the finest specimens in England. It would have been waste of

time to exhibit the place in detail to Ella, who knew nothing of the subject, and cared less. So she soon thought it quite natural that all explanations should be addressed to her.

The party in the house was a large one, and more than one member of it said something to Lady Wychwood about Lord Hexham's attentions, and that they supposed they should soon have to congratulate her; and, though she denied it most emphatically, believed in their own clear-sightedness none the less. Altogether it was a very pleasant visit, and the change did Mignonette decided good. Though still very unhappy, it was not so easy at Hexham as at Wychwood to wander about all day thinking only of Edgar, pitying him for his disappointed love for Hilda, and wondering what it could have been that he wanted to say at the trysting-tree. Of course Mignonette always told herself that it could have been nothing of any importance, and that it was only natural

that after the trouble of parting with Hilda, and the sorrow of losing kind Aunt Milly, he should have forgotten all about it, and never have even sent her a message of sorrow that he had been prevented from keeping his appointment; but still she could not help the question constantly recurring, "What could it have been he wanted to say, about which he spoke so earnestly?"

It was good for her to have her thoughts diverted from herself and her own sorrows, and this was done at Hexham perhaps more effectually than could have been the case anywhere else. It was a very beautiful place, and the wild scenery of the Chase was, even in winter, a perpetual delight to her artistic eye. Then Lord Hexham was not contented with merely exhibiting his castle and showing her what to admire; he took her to the library and made her read books illustrative of the different points which he had shown her—in fact, he did all in his power to fill her thoughts with Hexham, and so to exclude

Edgar. And to a certain extent he succeeded.

While she was reading up points that he professed to wish to discuss with her, her own sad thoughts were banished for the time, and her health decidedly benefited by the change. But, if Lord Hexham believed that he was advancing himself one step in her good graces, he was entirely mistaken.

Mignonette had given her answer, and never dreamt that it was by no means regarded as final. What could all the castles in Christendom or the wealth of the Indies avail in altering her mind? She loved Edgar Barford, and though she was now sadly aware that he did not love her, that her hopes, built on his manner on two occasions, had been castles founded in sand, she yet loved him for ever, and no other man had a chance, even the faintest, of supplanting him.

When she left Hexham, it was with a consciousness of having enjoyed her visit extremely, but without the slightest thought

that it still only rested with her to become the mistress of the castle, and the adored wife of its owner.

Lady Wychwood, of course, could not believe in such a state of things, and tormented herself with doubts whether she had not been very indiscreet in bringing the girl to Hexham, and letting her see what a splendid position its mistress would command. Still she trusted greatly in her own diplomatic powers, and thought she should be able to prevent Lord Hexham's suit from prospering when he renewed it.

About the middle of February, Hilda and Lord Willibald, having terminated their tour of visits among his apparently innumerable relations, arrived at Wychwood for a short stay.

It really seemed to Mignonette that Hilda's head had been completely turned. She gave herself great airs, seemed to expect everything she said to be received as law, and

could only talk of lords and ladies. "The dear Duchess," "dearest Gertrude Rockshire," was always on her tongue, and all the Lady Emilys and the Lady Evelyns with whom she had made acquaintance were apostrophised as "dearest," "darling," "sweetest," and similar terms of endearment.

Lady Wychwood seemed to be quite in awe of her patrician daughter, and made but a feeble remonstrance when Hilda laid down the law that her mother's visiting-list would require complete revision, and that various friends and acquaintances "must be quietly dropped. *We* could not meet them, you know—our set is so different."

Mignonette made no remark, but she observed that Hilda never made such speeches before her husband. Indeed, Lord Willibald himself seemed little inclined to be high and mighty, or to give himself airs; he was simply what he had always been: a not very wise young man, but amply endowed by nature

with sweet temper and good spirits, and made himself a very pleasant inmate of the Manor House.

He would have been really horrified if he had known how worship of the Peerage had eaten into his wife's very soul. To him, who had been accustomed to live among its members all his life, they were very ordinary gentlemen and ladies, differing in no way from the untitled gentry, and he never dreamt of the lofty pedestal upon which she elevated anyone possessed of the magic title of Lord. He would not have hesitated to tell her it "was snobbish, and awfully bad form," had he been aware of her weakness; but he was in blissful ignorance, and never guessed that in this respect she differed from himself. Sir Clement, who had rather expected to be bored by him, liked him better than he had expected, and he seemed able to amuse himself, which was a relief to everyone.

Hilda was considered by everyone to have improved in looks, but Mignonette thought

there was a strangely restless expression in her face, and that she often looked as if she were afraid of, or expecting something. Also she could not help noticing her feverish eagerness to get possession of her letters in the morning, before anyone—and especially, as it seemed to her, Lord Willibald—saw them.

Mignonette never founded any suspicion on this, being the last person in the world to think evil of anyone; it merely struck her as strange. One morning, however, she saw Hilda start as one of her letters caught her eye. She looked furtively round to see if anyone were watching her, and then dropped it hurriedly into her pocket. It was odd, Mignonette thought, but it was no business of hers, and she thought no more about it.

After breakfast Mignonette set off to the rectory. The relations between her and Clare were never very pleasant, and she went there as seldom as possible; but there was a question that it was requisite should be asked, and so she went. The servant showed some hesi-

tation about admitting her, but finally did so, and, on being ushered into the drawing-room, to her extreme astonishment, she found Clare lying on the sofa sobbing convulsively.

"Clare, what is it? I beg your pardon—I would not have come in," exclaimed Mignonette, putting her hand on her shoulder.

"You!" exclaimed Clare, springing up, and regarding her with a look of such intense dislike that Mignonette shrank back in dismay. "What are you here for? Oh! I forgot. I suppose it is natural you should like to come and gloat over your handiwork."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you mean you do not know? That you are here by accident?"

"I know nothing at all. I came to ask you about those chants——"

"Then listen. We have just had a telegram to say that Edwin, my darling brother, has been killed in a duel at Monaco. And his death lies at your door, Reseda Wychwood. It was your petty spite that made Sir Clement

put him under a ban, which he would easily have forgotten if you had not always kept him up to it. And so, as it was uncomfortable to come home, he went elsewhere, and got into bad ways, and, oh ! this is the end ! Go away ! I hate the sight of you !”

“I will go,” said Mignonette, gently ; “for you are not yourself, Clare. If you were, you would never say what is so untrue. But, oh ! believe me, I am sorry for you, for you and poor Dr. Barford.”

“Will you go and leave me in peace ?” was all Clare’s reply ; and slowly and sadly Mignonette departed.

So this was the end of Edwin’s misused life. How terrible ! and what a shock and sorrow for Edgar ! Naturally she thought of his grief more than of either Dr. Barford’s or Clare’s. Still in one way it would be a relief. She knew how terribly he had felt the disgrace of Edwin’s career, how much he had offered to sacrifice to induce him to live honestly ; for Dr. Barford had confided this to Sir Clement

the only time that he had ever mentioned his second son's conduct.

When she reached home she found Hilda alone in the boudoir; she was sitting staring straight before her into vacancy, and started violently when Mignonette spoke.

"Good gracious, Reseda, how you startled me! How soon you are back!"

"Yes, they are in trouble at the rectory. They had just had a telegram to say that Edwin was killed yesterday in a duel at Monaco."

Hilda sprang up and faced her with an eager countenance.

"Edwin Barford dead! You are quite, quite sure?"

"Quite. I saw Clare."

"Thank Heaven! then I am safe for ever!" and, with a half-hysterical laugh, she fell fainting on the sofa.

Eau de Cologne and sal volatile were at hand, and Mignonette had the discretion to

summon no one. From Hilda's surprising exclamation she judged it might be better that her first words should have no hearers. It was evident, even to her inexperience, that there was something very strange on Hilda's mind.

The fainting-fit was of very short duration. Hilda sat up, passed her hand over her eyes, and said,

"What was it you said, Reseda? Was I dreaming?"

"I said that they had just heard at the rectory that Edwin was killed in a duel at Monaco yesterday."

"Impossible! I had a letter from him to-day!"

Mignonette remembered the letter that morning, and Hilda's evident disturbance, but she only said,

"They had a telegram—that is quicker than the post."

"That is true. Reseda, what did I say?—before I fainted, I mean?"

“‘Thank Heaven! then I am safe for ever!’”

“Did I? Well, now I must tell you all; it will be a relief. You’ll never breathe a syllable of it to anyone?”

“Of course not. But, Hilda, don’t tell me unless you wish it. I’m not curious.”

“No, I know that; but you must listen. You can’t fancy the relief. I met him first at Manchester, and mamma told me not to mention it, as he was tabooed here. She said it was ludicrous not to be civil to him there because of Sir Clement’s fancies. Well, after she left I saw a good deal of him; he made tremendous love to me, and I did like him awfully—then. Then in London I used to meet him at the Cawthornes, and then alone in Kensington Gardens, and one day he persuaded me to go to a registry-office to be married. Let me finish,” as Mignonette gave an exclamation of astonishment. “We were married under assumed names, and he gave my age as twenty-two. Soon after I began

to find he did not care so much for me as for the fortune Mr. Cawthorne was to leave me—I knew all about it, though I was supposed not to, and I had told him. But Mr. Cawthorne insisted I should marry some one he chose, and really gave me my choice between Willibald and Lord Penwarden. Well, in a very little while I found I cared a great deal more about Willibald than I had ever done about Edwin; and then there was the scandal about his cheating, and Mr. Cawthorne grew very impatient that I should make up my mind, and I found out the marriage in a false name and with a wrong age wasn't legal, and so I accepted Willibald."

"Was that why you insisted on waiting a year?"

"Yes—I wanted to make quite sure I was free. He kept writing to me to get round Mr. Cawthorne, so as to make him leave me his money irrespective of whom I married. I knew it was no good, but I pretended to try. When he saw I was going to be married he was

very angry, and I assured him I was only carrying out a scheme, and that of course I couldn't marry Willibald, as I was married already. I thought, if I once were safely married, he would see it was no use worrying me any more. It was all going very well, till, three days before, I got a letter from him to say he was in England, and must see me, and that, as of course he could not come here openly, I must see him that night in the picture-gallery, where we were safe, because everyone was afraid of the ghost."

If Hilda had looked at Mignonette at that moment, she would have been astonished at the expression of her countenance. Amazement, delight, and bewilderment struggled for the mastery.

"It was hard work to persuade him," continued Hilda, "that it was only a plot, and that I did not a bit mean to be married; but I succeeded at last. I never was so glad of anything in my life as when he went away. When he saw the marriage in the paper he

wrote me a furious letter; he said he had plenty of money then, but if ever he wanted any I must supply it, or he would write to Willibald and tell him he had a prior claim upon me. And, though I knew he hadn't, his telling what had happened would have killed me. Well, I got a letter this morning, saying if I did not send him a thousand pounds by this day week, I knew what would happen. I was at my wit's end, for of course I had not a quarter of the money. And now I am safe for ever! I can hardly believe it!"

"And yet you say you loved him?"

Mignonette's voice was very grave, and, to Hilda, sounded severe. She did not understand affections that waxed and waned so rapidly.

"Oh, well, yes, I did once, but that was before I knew Willibald so well—of course, Edwin couldn't be compared with him. But you can't understand, Reseda; you have never been in daily terror of a terrible disgrace, so you can't tell the relief. I really hardly knew

before how I had dreaded him. Of course, I'm sorry for his people and all that, though, after all, you know, after the first, they'll be very thankful: he couldn't show in England, and of course he was always a disgrace, even though he did call himself by another name. Oh! depend upon it, it's all for the best. As for me, I feel a different creature."

Mignonette did not agree, but she supposed Hilda was right, and that she did not understand, so she said no more, and, after a little, disappeared to her own room. Once there, she sat down to think. So, after all, it was not Edgar who loved Hilda, and who had met her in the picture-gallery—it was not love for Hilda that had made him miserable, and forced him to leave Wychwood without seeing her! Possibly, after all, his manner that night had meant what she had hoped, and the meeting at the trysting-tree might have been as pleasant as she had anticipated. Of course, it was comprehensible enough why he had not kept his appointment; but—here her new-born

hopes began to fade—if such were indeed the case, why had he left without seeing her, without a word, or even a message? Alas! she feared that, though he did not love Hilda, neither did he love her. Still it was to her an immense relief to feel that it was not he that she had seen in the moonlight in the picture-gallery; he seemed less far from her, at any rate, now that she had no certainty that he loved another.

So occupied was she with her own concerns that it was some time before she thought much of Hilda's strange story. But, when she came to think of it calmly, it filled her with unfeigned horror. Naturally, Mignonette had not studied what did or did not invalidate marriages, as Hilda had done, and it seemed to her that she must have been bound to Edwin. It was a terrible story. - How could she have lived with such a weight of anxiety hanging over her, and gone on going out and apparently enjoying herself? It was quite beyond Mignonette's comprehension, and would, she

felt sure, have been beyond her powers. She could quite imagine that her tidings had been an immense relief, though still feeling shocked at the callousness with which Hilda spoke of the death of one whom she must presumably have loved once.

Dr. Barford did not appear to wish to be condoled with on his son's death. He answered those who ventured to speak to him in the curtest manner, said something of his having been for some time dead to him, and shut himself up more than ever in his study. Clare bewailed her brother almost ostentatiously, and declared she should never know happiness again.

Matters were in this state at the rectory, when the party from the Manor House went to London as usual after Easter.

In London matters fell at once into their ordinary routine. Hilda made some endeavour to dictate to her mother whom she should and should not know, but her ban fell upon one or two of Sir Clement's friends, and he at once

declared, in the most positive manner, that he would not have them dropped. It came to Lord Willibald's ears what his wife had tried to do, and he spoke very strongly indeed to her upon the subject, so her attempt at fineladyism received a rude check.

Ella was soon engaged to a Mr. Loraine, a marriage which hardly satisfied her mother. He was of good family and fairly well off, but Lady Wychwood had what she called "higher views" (which, in plain English, meant that she wished her daughter to marry some one with a title), and lamented "that dear Ella was throwing herself away."

It was shortly after the announcement of the engagement that Sir Clement and Lady Wychwood went to dine at the house of Sir John Desmond, an uncle by marriage of Mr. Loraine's. Sir John was an old Indian officer, and Lady Wychwood, while she was dressing, wished cordially that the dinner were over. She always dreaded any meeting with Indian acquaintances, and there was no know-

ing what people Sir John might have collected. They arrived early, and so did Lord Hexham, who had also been invited. Sir John had made his acquaintance in Belgrave Square, and had invited him because he seemed such a friend of the family. Several more people entered, none of whom were known to Lady Wychwood, and she began to breathe freely, when a late couple were announced, Sir George and Lady Beechcroft.

Lady Wychwood heard the name with horror. They had been at the station where she had made herself most conspicuous with Captain Lauriston. Lady (then Mrs.) Beechcroft had declined her acquaintance. It was the only time that Colonel Roston had ever given the slightest sign of being otherwise than pleased with her conduct. She wished that the floor would open and swallow her. If only Lord Hexham were not there! Sir George would be sure to recognize him, and the secret of his identity would certainly be discovered!

And her forebodings were at once fulfilled. She had hardly time to respond to the barely courteous bow which Lady Beechcroft gave on being introduced to Lady Wychwood, whom she at once recognized as Mrs. Roston, before she saw Sir George seize Lord Hexham's hand and shake it heartily, and heard him say,

"Lauriston, my dear fellow, how are you? Delighted to see you again."

All recollection of the flirtations, or the proprieties of Dustymabad had been long erased from Sir George's mind.

"I beg your pardon, Sir George," interposed their host, "but you are making some mistake. This is Lord Hexham, not Captain Lauriston."

"It is the Vere Lauriston I knew in India," returned Sir George. "Bless you, my good fellow, I saw him every day. Lord Hexham? I thought the family name was Dorimer. Ah! I remember now asking you once, when you mentioned Lord Hexham, and you told

me your grandfather had changed his name to Lauriston. Well, glad to see you again, anyhow. You remember Lady Beechcroft?"

Yes, Lord Hexham remembered her only too well, and the insults she had heaped on the woman whom he then believed he loved. Even at such a moment he was conscious of a feeling of wonder how he could ever have cared for anyone so absolutely different from Mignonette!

He felt a supreme compassion for Lady Wychwood. He knew Sir Clement well enough to understand that he, of all men, would never pardon such a deception as had been played upon him. Now that it was discovered, and that he saw it—not as he and Lady Wychwood had chosen to represent it to each other, as an innocent ruse, but in all the blackness with which Sir Clement would not unnaturally invest it—he was amazed how he ever could have been induced to consent to such a thing.

Of course Sir Clement would suspect the

matter to be far worse than was really the case. Who could blame him for being suspicious after having been so deceived? He would naturally refuse to receive Lord Hexham again, and he thought, with a bitter pang, that he was thus for ever divided from Mignonette. Even to himself it was a surprise what intense agony that thought gave him! He had hardly realised before how much he had taught himself to hope.

There was no chance that Sir Clement had not heard. He had been standing beside him, and he had not only observed the start he gave, but had seen the set, stern expression that came over his face, and the look of contempt that he gave his wife.

Lady Wychwood saw that look too, and it nearly paralysed her. She never knew how that evening passed; how she sat by Sir John, and answered with sufficient coherence what he said, not to attract observation; how she talked in the drawing-room, and even contrived to snub Lady Beechcroft; how

she talked to Sir George of "old times" in India, and finally took the two girls to a ball, while Sir Clement went home.

All through the evening she saw nothing but that look of sovereign contempt, and turned over and over in her mind, with fear and trembling, what his course would be. There was no knowing to what length his suspicions might go, and she well knew that however speciously she might defend herself it would be of little avail—he would simply not believe her. Sir Clement was a man who was trustful and confiding almost to a fault, so long as he could trust at all; but his confidence once betrayed was never renewed, and his wife well knew that he would never again believe a word she said. Even when she was at length at home and alone, Lady Wychwood was far too perturbed to be able to sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

Think not for wrongs like these unscourged to live ;
Long may ye sin, and long may heaven forgive ;
But when ye least expect, in sorrow's day,
Vengeance shall fall more heavy for delay.

Gotham. Book 2.—CHURCHILL.

SIR CLEMENT'S feelings when he discovered so suddenly the imposition which had been practised upon him may be more readily imagined than described. With the rude shock all his love for his wife died away. Hitherto he had believed everything, had accepted her concealment of her parentage and her relations as only another proof of her love and consideration for him. Now he saw everything in the very worst light, and felt firmly

persuaded that she had never cared for him, and had only married him to secure wealth and position; while her heart, such as it was—Sir Clement was not unnaturally very bitter—remained, no doubt, in the possession of Captain Lauriston.

She had been bold, certainly! It was a courageous thing to allow him to visit in her husband's house, after his express command she should hold no further communication with him in the interest of her own good name, even under a different title. But then such courage only showed, of course, how much she loved him, and Sir Clement ground his teeth as he thought how completely he had been deceived by her inimitable acting, and how implicitly he had believed in her somewhat demonstrative affection. Well, that was all over now. Of course he should never again believe a word she uttered. What a disappointment it must have been to her, he thought, with a certain malicious satisfaction, to find that if she had only waited, had only been true and faithful to

the man whom he presumed she must love, her position in the world would have been so infinitely superior.

It was no easier for him to sit through dinner and appear to be interested in what was going on around him than it was for his wife, but she dissembled her uneasiness far better than he did; and, looking at her, he mentally decided she must be brazen and shameless. Lady Beechcroft, who fell to his share, found him a very dull companion, and so, it must be confessed, did Lord Hexham prove to Lady Desmond. Sir George's greeting had had the effect of making his old friend's dinner go off very heavily, and so his wife informed him the moment they got into the carriage.

"Well, George, you created a sensation for once. I am sure Sir Clement Wychwood had never known till to-night who Lord Hexham was."

"What could it matter to him?"

"You don't mean to say you've forgotten Dustymabad and the scandalous way Lady

Wychwood (Mrs. Roston she was then) went on with Captain Lauriston? Don't you remember I refused to know her, and all the fuss? And here she is walking down to dinner before me!"

"Dear me! I never meant to make mischief."

"But you have, and I'm glad of it. I'm sure Sir Clement had heard of Captain Lauriston—some one was sure to tell him of that—but he didn't know he and Lord Hexham were the same man; and he's been staying at Wychwood for weeks together, I hear. Mrs. Roston always was very cunning, but the cleverest people over-reach themselves sometimes."

Sir Clement did not appear in the drawing-room again after dinner; he made some excuse to his host, and set off to walk home. The Desmonds lived in Portland Place, and, as Sir Clement sauntered along with his cigar, he suddenly found himself opposite St. George's Church, where, nearly four years before, he had

wedded the woman whom he that night had almost learnt to hate.

Suddenly there flashed into his mind the remembrance of the man who had stopped them as they came out of the church. Then he had thought nothing of it, having been easily persuaded by his wife that it was some mistake, and he had never thought of the stranger again; but to-night he felt suspicious even of that. He could only recollect that the man was tall and fair, but—Ha! he remembered now that, as they drove off, he had seen him turn to speak to his sister and uncle. It was not late—he would go and see Mrs. Davenant; and he was soon knocking at her door in Harley Street, and, to his satisfaction, found her alone.

“Clement, is it really you? How late you are!”

“We have been dining in Portland Place, and I am walking home. Matilda, you recollect, the day I was married, a man stopped us as we were driving off; he afterwards spoke

to you and Uncle George. Can you recollect what he said?"

"Asked who you and Cecilia were."

"Nothing more?"

"Something, when Uncle George asked whom he took Cecilia for, about her being 'only a woman who had deceived him.' I wanted to write and tell you about it, but Uncle George said I had better not meddle."

"Have you ever seen him since?"

"Not that I know of, but you know I am bad at remembering faces. He was tall and fair—something like Lord Hexham. But why do you ask?"

Like Lord Hexham!—of course it was he! Sir Clement saw it all, but he only answered, coolly,

"Oh! I don't know; it came into my head just now, and I thought I would ask you."

What was to be his course? was the question that occupied Sir Clement's mind as he strolled slowly homewards. At first he had declared to himself that instant separation was abso-

lutely necessary ; but, as he thought the matter over and over, he began to waver. He was an unspeakably proud man ; to doubt anyone was agony to him. He could not even now bring himself to believe that his wife had been guilty of worse treachery than of having allowed him to make an intimate friend of a man with whom he had forbidden her to have any further communication. He shrank from the publicity of a separation : he could not endure the thought of his private affairs being the subject of gossip and remark. Anything but that, he thought, if it could by any means whatsoever be avoided.

If only his Mignonette were happily married ! Then he and Lady Wychwood could retire to the Manor House, they would see no one, and, while virtually separated, keep up appearances in the eyes of the world, while he depended on his duties and occupations as a country gentleman for distraction. But Mignonette was not married ; he terribly feared that her heart was given to a man who, though he said he adored

her, had stated in the plainest manner that he could not marry, and dared not address her. Therefore, the plan of retirement to the manor was as yet hardly feasible. He could not condemn his sweet child, in the flower of her youth, to interment in the country without congenial companionship. He had not made up his mind what his course must be when he met Lady Wychwood the next morning.

It was not very often that Lady Wychwood made her appearance at breakfast the morning after a ball, and, as Ella always slept late, Mignonette and her father generally enjoyed that meal alone together. But, on this occasion, Lady Wychwood was far too anxious to sleep, and too nervously desirous to know how her husband "took it" to be absent from the breakfast-table, and she was down before either of the others.

Breakfast was a very stiff and uncomfortable meal. Mignonette, quite innocent of anything being amiss, talked as usual, and Sir Clement did his best to answer in the same

strain; but he was no actor, and could not conceal the stiffness and discomfort he felt. Mignonette fancied he had had letters which had annoyed him, and did not wish to be disturbed, and relapsed into silence; and Lady Wychwood was too nervous to do more than make a few disjointed observations on the ball of the night before, which were addressed to Mignonette.

"I should be glad if you would come to the library for a few moments," said Sir Clement, coldly, when his daughter had left the room.

Lady Wychwood followed him with a sinking heart. He looked so cold and so stern, she felt that the power of her beauty had gone from her.

"Have you anything to say?" he asked, quietly, when she had seated herself.

"Oh! Clement, be merciful! I was so glad to see an old friend. And, when I had not spoken at first, I could not speak at all."

“So you allowed your lover to become the friend of your husband, who had forbidden you to hold any communication with him.”

His tone was more bitter and sarcastic than she could have believed possible.

“He was not my lover!” she answered, quickly. “There has never a word passed between us which you might not have heard.”

Then a sudden thought of the means of clearing herself dawned upon her. It was strange it had not occurred to her before.

“It is not for my sake he has cared to be at Wychwood so much.”

“Was it for mine? I am flattered.”

“No, not for yours nor for mine. It is Reseda who attracts him. He is passionately in love with her.”

Sir Clement started. If this were not a story trumped up to disarm his suspicions, it was very strange.

"I can hardly believe that," he said, coldly. "Believing Lord Hexham to be my friend and a gentleman, I told him of my belief that Mignonette cared for some one else."

"You mean Edgar Barford. He told me you had told him, and consulted me as to whether his chance would be better if he proposed to her at once, or if he waited. I thought pique might incline her to listen to him, and advised him to propose at once. He did so, and she refused him."

"I am sincerely glad she did. I could never have allowed my darling child to marry a man who was capable of the conduct of which Lord Hexham has been guilty: of entering my house on false pretences."

"He means to propose to her again."

"He will have no opportunity of doing so: our acquaintance is at an end. And I shall desire Mignonette not to speak to him again."

"But it will be so strange—will make such a scandal!"

"You must take the consequences of your own conduct, Lady Wychwood. You have no one but yourself to thank for this painful state of things. I cannot tell you the pain which it is to me to realise your utter untrustworthiness; to know that it is impossible to believe you. I discovered last year that you had deceived me respecting your family. Yes,"—as he saw her start violently, and turn scarlet—"I had an interview—in this very room—with your sister, Miss Jones, who came to me, full of indignation at your having given a ball when you knew that your mother was dead. I did not believe her insinuations as to your motives then. I thought you had concealed your birth and your brother's misfortunes from love of me, fearing that, if I were aware of them, I should withdraw my offer of marriage; and that, having once thus committed yourself, you were obliged to act out your part. We are apt to be lenient to faults committed for love of us. But I no longer believe in that love. Another statement of Miss Jones's

—to which I did not at the time give credence—was that you had written to announce your engagement to Captain Lauriston, and I now recognize Lord Hexham as the man who called you ‘Cecilia’ at the church-door on our wedding-day, and who afterwards described you to my sister as ‘only a woman who had deceived him.’”

Lady Wychwood was silent; that her husband should have seen Mary, and heard all she was sure to have told him to her disadvantage, and yet held his peace, amazed her beyond measure.

“If you remember,” continued Sir Clement, “I took measures to avoid the necessity of your remaining in London, which must, I felt, under the circumstances, be painful to your feelings. I thought your deceit had all been for love of me, and I would not give you the pain of knowing that it had been unavailing. But now my eyes are opened; I see why you married me—because I was rich and in a good worldly position, and at that time Captain

Lauriston was not so. It must have been a sore mortification to you, when he became Lord Hexham, to think what you had missed by your undue precipitancy."

"You are cruel," she murmured, covering her face with her hands.

"Not more so than you deserve. Even now you are not the least ashamed of what you have done, you are only sorry to have been found out."

There was a pause. He seemed so perfectly cold and calm that Lady Wychwood was fairly puzzled as to what line it would be best for her to take. If he had been passionately angry she would have understood the position far better; as it was, she was afraid to speak, lest she should make some false move. Sir Clement walked slowly up and down the room three or four times with his hands behind him; at length he paused before his wife's chair.

"I shall write to Lord Hexham," he said,

“and tell him that our acquaintance is at an end. I shall also tell him that I must decline any overtures he may propose making for my daughter’s hand. I should forbid your ever speaking to him again, but I confess I should not be able to believe your promise; you have deceived me too much and too often for confidence on my part to be ever again possible. I must take precautions that it shall be impossible for you to do so. We shall remain in London till after Ella’s marriage; I have no more wish that the world should gossip about my private affairs than you have. During that time you will not go out alone; either Mignonette or I must accompany you. I shall not tell my child what has occurred: I shall merely say that, from conduct of his which has come to my knowledge, I no longer consider Lord Hexham a proper acquaintance for the ladies of my family, and that I desire she will inform me at once if he ever attempts to speak to any of you. After the wedding I

shall go abroad with Mignonette for a short time; she is not looking well, and change of scene will do us both good. You will remain at Wychwood, with my sister and my uncle as your guests; of course Lord and Lady Willibald can also be with you if you choose."

"You are very hard, Clement. After all, that deception about my family——"

"Has nothing whatever to do with your much more serious offence. I kept silence about it, and should always have done so if I had not wished to show you how much I know. It will make no difference to Miss Jones; her £200 a year, on condition of which she left England, will still be paid."

"What!" almost screamed Lady Wychwood; "has she taken money from you too? Why, she represents herself to me as being quite dependent on what I send her! I paid her passage out."

"And I *took* her passage out. I was determined she should go, lest she should annoy

you. However, you can scarcely complain—truth and straightforwardness are not, it would seem, among your family virtues.”

Lady Wychwood was silent; she felt herself quite unable to cope with her husband in his cold, stern mood.

“There is nothing more to say, I think,” said Sir Clement, at length; “I need not detain you any longer.”

Lady Wychwood rose and stood for a moment uncertain. Even now, was it not possible that she might vanquish him by some act of tenderness? How would it be if she threw herself on her knees before him, kissed his hands, raised her beautiful eyes to his face, and implored him not to withdraw his affection from her? Perhaps Sir Clement divined her thought, for he walked to the bell and rang it; and his wife withdrew, having had no opportunity of trying her histrionic measures.

When the bell was answered, Sir Clement sent for his daughter.

"Mignonette, my dear," he said, "is it true, as I am told, that you have refused Lord Hexham?"

"Yes," said Mignonette, so astonished at the question that she never reflected, as she would otherwise have done, that she had no right to betray his secret; then, blushing violently, "Oh! papa, I ought not to have told you!"

"Never mind, child; it is quite safe with me. I am very glad you refused him, for I have learnt that respecting him which makes me consider him unfit to associate with you. I desire you never to speak to him again, and you must immediately inform me if he attempts to address either you or Lady Wychwood."

"But, papa——" began Mignonette, in extreme surprise.

Her father interrupted her; the subject was so very unpleasant that he did not choose to say more about it than he could help.

"There can be no buts, Mignonette: I have

given you a distinct order, and you must obey it."

"Yes, of course, papa," said Mignonette, humbly.

She did not in the least understand, but she saw that her father was annoyed, and would prefer her silence.

"You are not looking well, my child," said Sir Clement presently, after a pause, during which he had written and sealed his brief epistle to Lord Hexham: "what do you say to a little plan of mine that you and I should go abroad together after this wedding is over?"

"Go alone together, papa!—oh, you don't know how I should enjoy going abroad!"

"Well, yes; I think you and I will go together. Where would you like to go?"

In her secret heart the only spot for which Mignonette really cared was Vienna—was not that the spot where Edgar was?—but of course she could not say so. She was far too proud to do or say anything that might seem

like wishing to follow the man who unfortunately possessed her heart, but had not given her his in exchange. So she could only mention what seemed second best, and said,

“The Pyrenees.”

“That will do charmingly, and it is almost the only part of accessible Europe where I have never been,” said Sir Clement. “Then we will consider that settled. As soon as the wedding is over, you and I will start for the Pyrenees. Perhaps I may show you a little of Spain, too. We will see about that when we get to our destination.”

It sounded very delightful, but when Mignonette sat down in her own room to think over what her father had said, she felt very much bewildered. He had looked so hard and stern when he spoke of Lord Hexham, whom he had always seemed to like so much, and he had spoken quite angrily when she exclaimed in surprise. There must be something very strange, and evidently she was not to know what it was. Then the scheme of going

abroad was absolutely delightful, and it would be quite charming to be alone with papa ; still it was very strange that he should leave Lady Wychwood at home, and still more that he should never once have referred to her.

Meanwhile, Sir Clement, who never delayed what he had to do, was already busy making his arrangements. It was now early in July, and Ella's wedding was fixed for the first week in August. The whole party were to have been the guests of Lord Hexham for Goodwood at a house he had taken in the neighbourhood, but that was now, of course, quite out of the question: Still he supposed the date of the marriage could hardly be advanced: all the arrangements were made, and it was better to leave things alone, or else he would have liked to get away at once to fresh scenes.

He went to Mrs. Davenant, and asked her to spend the autumn with Lady Wychwood at the Manor House, which she was very willing to do, though she was much puzzled why her

brother had taken this sudden fancy for going abroad again, and why his wife did not accompany him. Sir Clement did not enlighten her, or suffer her to perceive that there was anything amiss between himself and Lady Wychwood; he doubted his sister's reticence and discretion, and felt that the best chance of her not talking of what he did not wish known was to keep her in ignorance of it. But he acted differently with regard to his uncle. To him he told everything, and asked if he would mind spending a dull autumn at Wychwood, virtually in charge of its mistress.

"You will ask why I do not stay at home myself," he said; "but Mignonette has not been looking well for some time, and I really wish to give her a change. Besides, I think it will be better for us to be apart for a little; it will make it easier to begin again on a different footing without exciting remark; only of course I cannot, after what has passed, trust to Lady Wychwood's assurance that she will not see Lord Hexham again. Matilda is

to spend the autumn at the manor, but she knows nothing. Will you undertake the charge?"

"Yes," said Colonel Wychwood, "I will. But you need have no fears of Lord Hexham's making any attempt to see Lady Wychwood. If, as you tell me, he fell in love with Mignonette, it is pretty clear he had broken loose from his old allegiance, and he is not in the least likely to return to it. But make your mind quite easy. I have made no plans for the autumn, and shall be very happy to stay at Wychwood as long as ever you please; so if you and Mignonette are enjoying yourselves do not hurry home."

The next day Sir Clement received a short note from Lord Hexham. It entered into no explanation or exculpation; merely acknowledged the receipt of his letter, and expressed regret at the termination of their acquaintance and at "the death-blow thus given to his dearest hopes."

Three days after, the *Morning Post* contained

the announcement that "Lord Hexham had left town for America, with the intention of making a prolonged tour, which might very probably extend over several years."

CHAPTER X.

How exquisite is pleasure after pain!
 Why throbs my heart so turbulently strong,
 Pain'd at thy presence, this redundant joy,
 Like a poor miser, beggar'd by his store?

YOUNG.

Sorrows remember'd sweeten present joy.

Course of Time.—POLLOCK.

AS soon as the wedding was over, and the happy pair had started for Switzerland, Sir Clement, having seen Lady Wychwood set out for the Manor House in company with his uncle and sister, started with Mignonette on their projected tour. It was an immense relief to him to part from his wife for a time. He had loved her very dearly, but his affection had

been quite killed, or at least he firmly believed that it had been; and he felt that he must have some break, some breathing time, before he could begin the new life of calm courtesy, without either trust or affection, which was all that lay before him. It would be something entirely new to him to be alone with his daughter; he had never been so since she was a mere child, and even the scene of travel which she had selected was novel to him; he was almost in high spirits by the time they reached Paris.

There they paused for some days, for there was much that Mignonette was most eager to see, and, though Sir Clement proposed spending a longer time there on their return, he enjoyed so much her delight at all the new sights that met her eye that he was little disposed to hurry away. It was quite the end of August before they found themselves at Pau, and, when the first rapture at the sight of the lovely mountains had passed away, Sir Clement suggested that if they were to penetrate any

further they ought to start at once. Pau was possible later, but Eaux Bonnes, Eaux Chaudes, Cauterets, and Argelès required the finest weather they could command.

Mignonette felt as if she could hardly tear herself away from Pau; but as, on a showery September day, they drove up the valley towards Eaux Bonnes, and saw the occasional dark clouds unroll themselves from the mist-covered mountains,—while the sun lit up the emerald sward and the darker lines of rock, and rills of water sparkled in every direction, appearing like white threads or rolls of grey satin ribbon, according as they were in sunlight or in shadow, occasionally breaking into snowy wreaths of foam, or running half concealed by garlands of convolvulus,—she was charmed, and felt that each new sight seemed to surpass the last.

Limeshire was a flat and far from picturesque country, and to Mignonette, who had a passionate love of beauty, and a vivid appreciation of colour, the pleasure of all the lovely

scenery, which was so new to her, was so intense as to be almost pain. And her enthusiasm was not lessened when, walking on the Promenade Horizontale the next morning, they looked up the twin valleys of Aas and Ossau, with their grey stone villages and small white churches, while the river Gave foamed along the valley at their feet. It was a delight too in every expedition to gather flowers with which she was unfamiliar, excepting in some instances, as garden-plants: the deep blue gentianella, pale heath, new saxifrages, the grass of Parnassus, pinguicula, with its pale yellow-green leaves, winter cherry, and a particularly large and beautiful purple bugle, with rich, velvety-brown calyx.

After a short visit to Eaux Chaudes they returned to Eaux Bonnes, admiring the road blasted out of the solid rock by which it was approached, and, after remaining a few days, left for Bagnères-de-Bigorre. Taking up their abode at the best hotel, they meant to remain

but a very few days; but, on the second day of their stay, Sir Clement heard from the landlord that a young Englishman who was in the hotel was very ill and had no friends with him. It was nothing infectious, the doctor said, only brain-fever, apparently brought on by distress of mind; but the host seemed greatly annoyed at having a sick man in the house, and talked plaintively of the injury it would do him, which, as the hotel was nearly empty, the season for visitors being almost over, was certainly an imaginary grievance. Sir Clement had been too much abroad not to know how often it fared but ill with his countrymen who found themselves overcome by sickness in foreign, and more especially in French, hotels; and he felt an immediate compassion for this stranger left alone and grudgingly tended at Bagnères. He at once volunteered to go and see him, and the landlord led the way to his room, explaining volubly as he went that, if he had imagined that "le monsieur" had been ill, he

would never have admitted him within his doors.

Very great was Sir Clement's amazement when, in the invalid tossing restlessly from side to side, and muttering incessantly in a low voice, he recognized—Edgar Barford. Drawing the landlord out of the room he questioned him closely, and found that the young man had been in the house about a week, that he had seemed fairly well on his first arrival, but that he had made an expedition to the Col d'Aspin, had been caught in a fog there, and had been forced to remain on the summit till daybreak, had returned wet to the skin, and had taken to his bed with what was at first apparently a chill, but had soon turned to fever. *Monsieur le médecin* had prescribed a *tisane*, and it was by the bedside, but monsieur would understand that no one in the house had leisure to act as nurse.

Sir Clement observed that the invalid was

known to him, and that he would act as nurse at present ; meanwhile he should summon an English doctor from Pau. The landlord's civility at once knew no bounds ; if this milder Anglais interested himself so much about the invalid, he would doubtless be responsible for the payment of his bill, about which he had entertained some painful doubts : there was apparently nothing he was not now willing to do for *le pauvre malade*, who had before been left entirely to himself.

Having despatched his message to Pau, told Mignonette he was going to sit a little while with a sick fellow-countryman, but not who the invalid was, and got rid with some difficulty of the loquacious landlord, Sir Clement returned to Edgar's room. The young man was quite unconscious of who sat beside him : he kept tossing from side to side, and talking rapidly in a low tone to himself. Listening almost mechanically to these ravings of delirium, he became suddenly aware that

Mignonette's name was constantly recurring, coupled with the most endearing terms. He began to listen attentively.

"Mignonette, my own darling, I must go. I dare not see you again. Oh, Mignonette, my love, my love! it is hard—hard! Just, too, when all was smooth. Thank God, though, I had not said the words!—then I must have given a reason. A reason! Ha! ha! why not the true one? But no, no!" and then came a sort of wail of anguish. "Oh, Edwin, Edwin! how could you? You killed more than one,—you killed me, my heart, my life."

Then would come a pause as if from exhaustion, and then the low muttering recommenced.

"Mignonette, my own, if I could but know you were happy! if I could feel you had forgotten me! I know you loved me, darling. Oh, it was a cruel blow, just as I felt sure! If I could know you were happy."

And so, with many pauses and few changes,

the delirium went on: always the same cry to Mignonette, the same sense of her being lost by some act of Edwin's. Sir Clement was puzzled. He had told the young man so positively that he should not hold him responsible for what Edwin had done that it seemed hardly possible that he should, after all, have cut himself off from what he evidently considered to be his only happiness for that reason. He determined not to tell his daughter who the invalid was. It was very clear to him that, though Mignonette did not mope, and entered eagerly into all the enjoyment of the journey and of the fresh scenes daily unfolded before her eyes, she had never been the same since Edgar's abrupt departure, now nearly a year ago. It would only disturb her to know that he was under the same roof and dangerously ill, and so, when he left the room for dinner, he carefully concealed the name of the patient. But his mind was running so much upon Edgar, and on the mystery connected with him and Mignonette, that he was

not a very communicative or attentive companion, and hardly saw the vase of flowers which his daughter had arranged, and of which she was so proud, full of meadow saffron, dodder, the pale blue, ivy-leaved campanula, the yellowish-green leaves of the pinguicula, pink and blue centaury, lilac-fringed pink and maize. He returned to the patient as soon as possible, telling her not to sit up: he should probably be late.

Edgar certainly was more excited; he was constantly reproaching Edwin, and Mignonette's name was rarely mentioned. He seemed to connect his brother with the robbery at the rectory and the murder of Miss Barford—doubtless, Sir Clement thought, because those events had occurred just at the time when he had renounced Mignonette. The patient grew more and more feverish, and constantly tried to get out of bed. It was an immense relief to Sir Clement when the landlord came to the door and announced "*un médecin Anglais.*"

"Not from Pau yet! It is impossible!" exclaimed Sir Clement.

"No—this was *un monsieur* who was *en voyage*, and, hearing there was some one ill, had volunteered his services."

Very glad Sir Clement was to see the young man, who introduced himself as Dr. Morgan, produced a small medicine-chest, and, having heard all that Sir Clement and the landlord could tell him, proceeded to mix and administer a draught. After a little while it was clear that it was taking effect, the raving gradually lessened, and was reduced to mutterings, and at length ceased; and, although the sleep could not be called quiet, still it was a great improvement on the previous condition. Dr. Morgan insisted on sitting up that night with the patient.

"You would probably have to call me," he said, "and I may as well sit up. It is most likely he will require some attention in the night. To-morrow we shall see better what to do. Possibly Dr. Allen may bring a nurse

with him,—of course you mentioned the state of the patient?"

"Yes—as clearly as I could."

"It seems a fine physique," said the doctor, glancing at the patient.

"Yes, I believe he has generally excellent health."

"There is something very much on the mind."

"Yes, so it seems."

Sir Clement did not choose to say more; he hoped that the sleep might continue, and that poor Edgar's ravings might be at an end. He wished Dr. Morgan good night, begged to be called if he could be of use, and felt very glad to find that Mignonette had retired.

The next morning the news of the patient was not cheering. There had been a return of the delirium in the night, and, though he was now quiet, the weakness was excessive. Still Dr. Morgan hoped the worst was over, and thought Sir Clement had better not go into the room; for if, as he anticipated,

consciousness were beginning to return, it might be exciting to see an unexpected friend.

"You do not think I ought to send for his father?" asked Sir Clement.

"I do not think him in *immediate* danger now; but it would be as well to write and prepare his relatives. I cannot say he is out of danger, though I have strong hopes of him. Do you know anything of a murder and robbery of which he raves?"

"Yes," and Sir Clement gave a succinct account of the occurrences of the last October, adding that there had never been the slightest clue to the perpetrator.

"My patient knows who did it," said Dr. Morgan, quietly.

"You don't attach importance to his raving surely? Of course it made a great impression on his mind; but he was as much in the dark as anyone else as to who did it."

"He knows now. It is that which is on his mind."

As Sir Clement walked up the Bédât with his daughter, he saw little of the beauties which so delighted her. With his bodily eyes he of course saw the mountains, piled one above another, separated by their lovely little valleys, with white cottages nestling under chestnut-trees, beneath picturesque ledges of grey rock, and the range of the Pyrenees, with their crests tipped with snow; but his mind was engaged with the problem of what Edgar could have learnt respecting his aunt's murder. Suddenly an idea occurred to him that made him stop short, and almost cry out with horror.

In his raving, Edgar had connected it with Edwin. Was it possible that there could be any truth in this? Had he discovered it immediately, but felt it incumbent upon him to screen his brother, and was this the reason that he had so abruptly resigned his hopes of Mignonette? It was very horrible; but, the more he thought about it, the more likely it seemed. And as he thought this over and

over again, becoming momentarily more and more convinced of its truth, his answers to Mignonette's observations grew momentarily more wide of the mark. At length she said,

"Papa, is anything the matter? Would you like to go home?"

Sir Clement started out of his reverie.

"Home, child, already! Are you tired?"

"I meant home to Wychwood, papa. I thought something was vexing you, and that you might perhaps want to go back."

"No, dear; it is nothing of that kind," and then, feeling irresistibly the longing to talk to some one of what was on his mind, he forgot all his caution, and continued.

"Mignonette, the invalid at the hotel is Edgar Barford."

The girl gasped for breath, and clasped her hands convulsively as she asked, in a low voice,

"Is he very ill? Is he dying?"

"I trust not. Dr. Morgan is hopeful; but

he is very ill. Child! what is it?" as Mignonette buried her face in her hands, and burst into an agony of tears.

It was some time before her sobs would allow her to reply, but when she could she gasped,

"I am so glad there is hope."

It was clear to Sir Clement that he had been right in believing that his daughter's affection for Edgar had suffered no diminution. He thought it best now to tell her everything, and narrated all that Edgar had said to him, and all that he had heard in the sick-room. Mignonette listened in silence, her face hidden in her hands, till her father came to the description of what Edgar said about the murder, and Dr. Morgan's certainty that he knew who was the criminal. Then she sprang up, and looked at her father with a white face, and eyes dilated with horror.

"Oh, Heaven!" she cried. "Is it possible? Edwin was at Wychwood that night. I saw him!"

"You saw Edwin? Mignonette, how was that possible?"

For a moment Sir Clement almost believed that his daughter did not know what she was saying.

"I did. Papa, what I am going to tell you is a secret; you must not tell anyone; it does not concern me."

"Go on, child; I will keep your counsel. Only explain to me how you saw Edwin Barford."

Mignonette told her story as succinctly as possible: how she had seen Edwin and Hilda in the picture-gallery, and had always believed it must have been Edgar, until Hilda's relief at the tidings of his death had enlightened her. She did not know that in her short recital she had betrayed how absolutely miserable her mistake regarding the identity of the brothers had made her, but Sir Clement well remembered how ill and wretched she had looked, and was able to guess pretty well what she must have suffered.

"Well, I wish Lord Willibald joy of his wife," was his first observation, and he muttered to himself, "Like mother, like daughter."

Then, after a pause,

"My dear child, I think what you say makes it clear that Dr. Morgan is right. Edgar must have in some way discovered his brother's crime: it was that that made him renounce you, and is what is on his mind."

"But, papa, surely, surely Edwin couldn't—"

"I confess, my dear, it all seems to me to point in his direction; still I don't wish to condemn anyone without proof. And now we had better be moving homewards. Dr. Morgan must want to be relieved."

"Papa," said Mignonette, in a hesitating voice, after they had walked a short distance.

Sir Clement turned and saw tears in her eyes, and an anxious expression on her countenance.

"What is it, my child?" he said, gently.

"It is only—it wasn't *his* fault; it won't make you dislike Edgar?"

He looked at her keenly.

"My child, if what we believe should prove true, it is a hard thing that you ask of me—for of course I know what you mean—to give my only child to the brother of a murderer. But do not cry, my darling," as she covered her face with her hands; "what you say is true: it is not *his* fault, and I will promise to remember it."

Mignonette said nothing, but she took her father's hand and kissed it.

When they reached the hotel, Dr. Morgan met them with the intelligence that Dr. Allen had arrived, and took a hopeful view of the patient, and indeed from that time there was a decided, though gradual, improvement.

Three days later, when Sir Clement was sitting by him, he suddenly found Edgar's eyes fixed upon him, and saw that he was recognized.

"Where am I? What has happened?" asked a very feeble voice.

"You are in the hotel at Bagnères-de-Bigorre, and have been very ill, but are getting better: only you must not try to talk until you are stronger," answered Sir Clement, cheerily, at the same time, administering a cordial that had been prepared, and he had soon the satisfaction of seeing the patient's eyes close in a quiet sleep.

During the next two days Sir Clement avoided the sick-room at any time when Edgar was likely to be awake, lest, in his anxiety to talk, he should excite himself and retard recovery. Dr. Allen had returned to Pau, leaving the patient in Dr. Morgan's care, and at length he told Sir Clement that he thought the relief of talking would do more good than the excitement could do harm. It was evident that Edgar was very eager to begin, and yet it was also clear that he experienced great difficulty in doing so. Sir Clement easily guessed that this was owing.

to his uncertainty as to what he might have said in his delirium.

"Well," he said, as he sat down by the bed, "I am very glad indeed to see such an improvement. I sent a very cheering account of you to Wychwood this morning: a week ago I hardly dared to hope to be able to do so."

"A week! Have I been ill so long?"

"Rather more. It is a week yesterday since we arrived, and I came to see if I could do anything for a sick countryman, little dreaming I should find a friend."

"It has been most kind of you; the doctor tells me you have nursed me constantly. I can never thank you as I wish. Sir Clement, add one more kindness to my debts and tell me, did I—say anything strange in my delirium?"

Sir Clement had already asked Dr. Morgan what his answer had better be, and at once replied,

"My dear fellow, you said enough to tell

me what it was that made you resign your hopes of Mignonette and leave Wychwood so suddenly."

It was not possible that Edgar could grow paler than he already was, but he looked so appalled and terrified that Sir Clement hastened to add,

"I need hardly tell you that I will keep your secret as inviolate as you have done; and now, would it not be a relief to you to tell me everything?"

"A relief!—yes, indeed," said Edgar; but he looked so ill that Sir Clement insisted on his pausing a little to rest. Then he began: "As I went home from dinner that night, I was as happy as I could be. I had your consent; Mignonette had promised to meet me the next day at the old birch-tree where we had spent many happy hours; I thought I had little reason to fear what her answer would be. When I got home, my father called me into the library to tell me that he had at length determined how to invest that fatal money

that was lying at his banker's. I more than once was on the point of telling him of my hopes—how thankful I was afterwards that I had not!—how should I ever have accounted to him for my relinquishment of them?

“I sat with him till nearly one o'clock, and as I went upstairs, dear Aunt Milly called me into her room. I told her all you had said, and my hopes for the morrow. How pleased she was! I went to bed and fell asleep. How long I slept I do not know, but I was awoken by a noise which seemed like the fall of a chair, and a groan. I jumped up, threw on some clothes, ran down to the library, and found the door locked. Then I went round through the dining-room, and the first thing I saw was poor Aunt Milly lying insensible on the floor; the window nearest the dining-room door was open. Of course, my first thought was of her, and it was well it was so, or I should have given the alarm soon enough to have insured the apprehension of the thief. I lifted her on to the sofa, roused the servants,

sent for Dr. Martin, and tried all the remedies we could think of before I even thought of giving chase. She only recovered consciousness for a moment, looked at me, said, in a distressed voice, 'Oh, Edwin, Edwin!' and died. I never thought for a moment what those words meant. I had had a letter from Edwin the day before, dated from Monaco, and had no notion he was in England. I thought she had mistaken me for him, and felt grieved that I had not had her last farewell.

"The first thing that startled me was when I, luckily the first, searched the violet-bed beneath the window. I found a piece of broken watch-chain and a locket; it was one I had given Edwin some years before, and there was 'Edgar to Edwin' engraved on the inside. It quite stunned me. I remembered my poor aunt's cry of 'Edwin!' and it flashed upon me that it was my brother who had done this thing. But to the best of my belief he was not in England."

"He was that night—Mignonette saw him," said Sir Clement, and he detailed what his daughter had told him of the meeting in the picture-gallery.

"And Mignonette thought it was I!" exclaimed Edgar. "But, indeed, what else could she think? I had myself told her I had had a letter from Edwin at Monaco. In the locket there was a portrait of Miss Roston."

He paused a little, and then continued :

"I cannot tell you the agony I felt during the search; it took up my whole thoughts. I hardly seemed to understand when I was told about the robbery, and echoed quite mechanically the wonder that the burglar had not taken more ready money. When, at length, all search failed, and it was declared that there was no clue, I breathed again; but with the cessation of that anxiety came the agonizing thought that Mignonette was lost to me for ever. My lips were of course sealed, and I could not be so treacherous as to take advan-

tage of your kindness and marry her,—if, as I believed and hoped, she loved me,—with such a secret on my mind.

“When I had that interview with you, I was half wild. I hardly know what I said—my only thought was to get away as soon as possible. I went straight to Paris, and there, on the Boulevards, I met Edwin. I went with him to his hotel, and taxed him with his crime. He seemed utterly heartless. He told me he wanted the money, and should keep it, and as to Aunt Milly, why, he was very sorry, of course, but why didn’t she stay in bed, like a sensible woman, when she heard a noise? or why, having come down, couldn’t she promise to hold her tongue? He didn’t in the least *want* to hurt her, but of course, when she refused to be silent, it was necessary for self-preservation that she should be able to tell no tales. There was no making any impression on him, and I left him in disgust. If it had not been for my father, I could have found it

in my heart that night to give him up to justice."

He paused a little, and Sir Clement sat silent, feeling that it was better not to interrupt him.

"There was no use in my seeing him again," continued Edgar; "and indeed, when, two days later, I called at his hotel, I found he had left for Monaco. You will wonder how it was that, when he was actually in England, I received a letter from him at Monaco; but he had left letters with his servant there to post at intervals, so that there should be no suspicion of his being in England to connect him with the robbery. The next thing which I heard of him was that he had been killed, as you know, in a duel. I was grieved, of course, and yet I must confess to you that it was a great relief. I had so lived in dread that by some unforeseen event the secret would become known to my father, and I knew it would kill him."

"I can quite understand the relief," said Sir

Clement; "but when all was over, and the secret safe for ever, how was it that you did not come home, or that you did not write to Mignonette?"

Edgar looked surprised.

"I should never have dared to do such a thing," he said. "I felt that if you knew all you would not unnaturally withdraw the sanction you had given to my hopes, and I could not act so dishonourably as to take advantage of your ignorance of the secret, even though I felt certain it could never be discovered, as no human being was in possession of it but myself. Besides——"

And here he stopped, and appeared much embarrassed.

"Besides what?" asked Sir Clement, quietly.

"I heard—that is, Clare wrote to me—that Lord Hexham was evidently bent on marrying Mignonette, and that there was no doubt of her willingness. I have looked in the paper constantly since, expecting to see the announcement of her marriage."

"Clare jumped to conclusions with undue haste," said Sir Clement. "Mignonette never cared in the least for Lord Hexham, excepting as a pleasant acquaintance, and, from circumstances which I need not detail to you, he has ceased to be a friend of the family; he will never enter my house again."

"And Mignonette is well and—happy?"

"I think," said Sir Clement, with a smile, "that now that she knows you are out of danger, and that I told her, as I did the other day, all that you said to me at Wychwood, she is happy."

"Sir Clement!"—and Edgar raised himself in his bed, a faint flush coming into his white cheeks—"you do not surely—you *cannot* mean that, after all I have told you, you will still allow me to hope, still authorise me to speak to her? Oh! am I dreaming?"

"No, you are awake, and quite sensible," said Sir Clement. "Of course it is a sad story, yet, as Mignonette says, you are absolutely blameless. I think more highly of you than

before, for many men, knowing that their secret was perfectly safe, would not have acted as you have done, but would have come forward as if nothing had happened. The sad story is confined to ourselves, and will never be known to anyone else, and you have my full permission to woo and win Mignonette as soon as ever you are able."

Edgar essayed to speak, to say something of his extreme thankfulness and happiness, but the excitement and the revulsion of feeling were too much for him, and he fell back fainting.

Happiness is an excellent tonic, and it was not very long before the invalid was able to be moved to a sofa in Sir Clement's salon. During the morning of that day Mignonette was nervously restless and busy. Every article of furniture was moved many times, and she filled every available vase with such flowers as were still left. The meadow crocus, the yellow-green pinguicula leaves, the lilac-fringed pink, and sprays of spindle-berries, mingled

with maize, and with the orange-tinted leaves of the box, already touched by the sharp night-frosts, afforded her a mass of colour of which she made the most. Before Edgar appeared, the salon looked as if decorated for a *fête*, and then, hardly knowing why she was so nervous, she retreated to her bed-room. Sir Clement saw the look of disappointment on the invalid's face when he found the room was empty, and, as soon as he was comfortably established, went in search of his daughter.

"Go to him at once, dear," he said; "he was vexed at not finding you," and, so saying, he went out for a long walk, and left the young people to themselves.

Their meeting was a silent one. Edgar was too excited to speak, Mignonette too nervous, and also too shocked at his appearance. If he looked like this when he was said to be convalescent, how terribly ill he must have been! And her heart ached at the mere thought of the danger he had escaped. But, though they did not speak at first, the

pressure of their hands was eloquent, and Edgar's eager glance and Mignonette's down-cast eyes almost equally so.

After a pause he laid his thin white hand on hers.

"Mignonette dear, your father has told you all. You know why I went away without a word?"

"Yes." She spoke very low—speech was not easy.

"Mignonette, you know what I wanted to ask you under our trysting-tree, that I was going to ask you if you would be my own dear wife. Mignonette, will you answer me now? will you say yes?"

No answer, but her hand lay trembling in his.

"May I keep it, dear?" and he laid his other thin hand over it; then, raising it to his lips, "My own for ever."

"Yes, yours for ever," whispered Mignonette, as she knelt beside his couch, and he passed his arm round her and pressed his lips to hers.

More than two hours after, when Sir Clement returned, he found them sitting quite silent; but, even if her hand had not lain quietly in his, it would have needed but one glance at their faces to know that all was right between them. The look of quiet happiness on his child's face quite repaid Sir Clement for the effort it had been to him to overlook Edgar's unfortunate relationship to Edwin.

From the moment that his mind was set happily at rest about Mignonette, Edgar began steadily to improve; but he was very weak, and his recovery was naturally slow. It had grown very cold at Bagnères, and all the flowers which Mignonette so loved to collect and arrange had departed before he was strong enough to be moved to Pau.

"Mignonette darling," he said one day, when he was lying, as he loved to do, with her hand in his, "when did you first begin to love me?"

"Begin! Edgar dear, from always, I think."

"Ah! but when did you begin to know it, Mignonette?"

"Do you remember that ball in Carlton Terrace, when you came home from abroad? But, Edgar, when did you begin to care about me?"

"I might answer in your own words, 'from always.' Do you recollect that time on the ice when you were taking so much pains about Wilfred Roston?"

"Because he seemed so shy and strange? Oh, yes!"

"Well, that was the first time that I began to hope you cared for me."

"How strange!" said Mignonette, thoughtfully: "because—I remember it so well—you seemed to grow so cold all of a sudden."

"Yes, dear—because I was afraid that your father would not approve, that he would say you were too young to know your own mind, and would be displeased at my disturbing you. It was hard to wait and be silent, Mignon-

ette; but better that than that you should suffer."

"Edgar dear, I don't believe in your whole life you have ever thought of yourself!"

"I am thinking of nothing else now except you, my darling. Oh! if I could only get strong! It is sweet to lie here with you to nurse me; but I long to be well again. I want to have you really and safely all my own. It seems too much happiness, as if I must wake up to find it all a dream."

It was quite the end of October before they reached Pau, and, after spending a few weeks there, they moved to Biarritz. There, much to his dismay, Edgar was left to complete his recovery, while Sir Clement and his daughter went home. It had been decided that, after all, Edgar should relinquish his diplomatic career. Mignonette, though she did not say very much, evidently wished it, and evinced a disinclination to live out of England; and he felt that he should like to try political life

instead. With Sir Clement's influence, and the position of his daughter's husband, it would not be difficult for him to obtain a seat—it might even be possible to represent Limeshire itself. The wedding was fixed for February, and the young people were determined to return to the Pyrenees for their honeymoon.

CHAPTER XI.

Though fools spurn Hymen's gentle pow'rs,
 We who improve his golden hours,
 By sweet experience know
 That marriage, rightly understood,
 Gives to the tender and the good
 A paradise below.

The Fireside—COTTON.

Here before Heaven
 I ratify this my rich gift,
 Do not smile at me that I boast her off,
 For thou shalt find she will outstrip all praise,
 And make it halt behind her.

The Tempest. Act 4, Scene 1.

IT was with infinite ill-humour and the worst possible grace that Lady Wychwood resigned herself to her enforced seclusion at the Manor House and to the society of her un-

welcome guests. She had never got on particularly well with Mrs. Davenant, who was by no means a worldly person, and liked to talk in the minutest detail of her children's health and education, all of which bored her sister-in-law unspeakably; and she did not like her the better for feeling that she was set as a watch over her.

Happily, Mrs. Davenant was by no means clear-sighted, and had not an idea that her presence was at all unwelcome, or that there was any reason for Sir Clement wishing her to stay at Wychwood, beyond his desire that his wife should not be dull during his absence. But, even if she had been told that her sister-in-law was in complete ignorance of the real reason why she had been requested to take up her abode at the Manor House, Lady Wychwood would not have believed it. She felt sure that her two gaolers had been told all that had occurred, and had been desired to watch and report her every movement, and she took refuge in a sullen silence

that made her far from an agreeable hostess.

Of Colonel Wychwood she had always been afraid, for she had always felt—what was really the case—that he distrusted her. The meeting with Lord Hexham on the day of her marriage had aroused his suspicions that there was something amiss, and his impression had been confirmed on finding, when he stayed in Fernshire, and made inquiries in Kemp-litten and its neighbourhood as to anyone of the name of Distin, that such a patronymic had never been heard of. Owing to her fear, she was more courteous to him than to Mrs. Davenant; but it was very plainly to be seen that he too was a most unwelcome guest.

But, disagreeable as the present was, Lady Wychwood was more uncomfortable about the future. What would be Sir Clement's course when he returned home? Would he insist on her being always under surveillance, and use Mignonette as a spy upon her slightest action? If so, life would be quite intolerable. She already felt that she hated the girl. It

was she—so she told herself—who had alienated Lord Hexham's affection,—for she had no notion that it had really died a natural death,—and that was an injury her vanity could not forgive. She wished Reseda were married,—but no!—if she were, Sir Clement, in his present mood, might refuse to go to London any more, and solitary life at the Manor House was more than she could bear to think of.

Until his daughter was married, Sir Clement could not of course bury her in the country, and Lady Wychwood resolved that, until he became once more what she considered reasonable, any projected marriage of Mignonette's should be nipped in the bud. She would not even encourage her fancy, which she believed was great, for Wilfred. It would of course be a great thing to secure such a fortune for her son; but it would be far too dearly purchased if, in consequence of it, she herself were to be kept at Wychwood and debarred from shining in London society. Happily,

that tiresome young Barford, of whom she had at one time been afraid, had disappeared in some unaccountably sudden manner, and deliberately given up his aspirations to Mignonette's hand,—so that imminent peril was avoided.

Upon these self-congratulations came, as an unwelcome shock, the tidings that Sir Clement and Mignonette had found Edgar ill in the Pyrenees and were nursing him. The news came in a letter from Sir Clement to his sister,—he had not addressed a single line to his wife since leaving England,—and both Mrs. Davenant and Colonel Wychwood, lacking the exact key to her thoughts, were surprised at the extreme irritation which Lady Wychwood exhibited. Mrs. Davenant, innocently believing it was health she was anxious about, laboured hard to assure her that neither chill nor brain-fever was infectious, that they therefore ran not the slightest risk, and that of course Sir Clement would take care that Mignonette did not over-exert herself. Yet

she was far indeed, excellent as were her intentions, from pouring oil on the troubled waters: Lady Wychwood became more and more irritable; and Colonel Wychwood's only solution of the enigma was that she had entertained hopes for Wilfred, and was angry at the probability of their disappointment.

But, when Sir Clement announced the engagement, Lady Wychwood's wrath knew no bounds, and she talked of "the disgrace to the family," and her astonishment that Sir Clement "should be so bereft of his senses as to countenance a low marriage," till she roused Mrs. Davenant to tell her she could not know what she was talking about, for the Barfords were as good a family as any in Limeshire, and had always been the greatest friends of the Wychwoods; and caused a sardonic smile to cross Colonel Wychwood's countenance, at the scorn shown by Miss Jones, the daughter of an attorney in a very small way of business at Kemplitten, for peo-

ple so infinitely better born and bred than herself.

Lady Wychwood would take no notice of the announcement, would not go to the rectory, and declined to see Clare when she called. "Sir Clement must see the impossibility, and put an end to the engagement: the less said about it the better; she begged they would not mention it to anyone;" and she wrote a letter full of the impracticability of the marriage being allowed to Sir Clement, whose only notice of it was to insert an announcement of the engagement in the *Morning Post*.

Before he and his daughter returned home, Lady Wychwood had sunk into a kind of sullen despair, and Sir Clement's conduct did not re-assure her. He treated her with marked and cold politeness, but he was seldom alone with her, never consulted her on any topic, and, when she tried once or twice to inveigh against the marriage, quietly rose

and left the room. She felt as if she were beating herself against a rock, and was as wretched as it was in her nature to be. Her only satisfaction was in stopping the allowance she had hitherto paid her sister. She would not give Mary the pleasure of knowing that Sir Clement had told her of their interview, and was therefore unable to reproach her with having taken money from both sides: she merely wrote a very cold and curt letter, saying that, from circumstances over which she had no control, she could no longer continue to pay the money, and that it was of no use for Mary to write and threaten: she might do her worst,—she would not get any more.

Despite Lady Wychwood's opposition, the wedding took place with great splendour in London at the end of February. Both the young people would have preferred a quiet one at Wychwood, but Sir Clement had a reason for his choice. If his daughter had been making what the world would have

called a brilliant marriage, he would have been quite contented with as quiet a celebration as they pleased; but, as matters were, he was determined, by all the magnificence in his power, to do honour to Edgar, and show that he was satisfied. Edgar understood and appreciated his feeling, and explained it to Mignonette when she was inclined to murmur against it.

They started at once to the Pyrenees, lingering at Pau till the season was sufficiently advanced for them to proceed to some of the other valleys, and finally re-visiting Bagnères-de-Bigorre, and making expeditions from there. One lovely day they drove to the Col d'Aspin, and returned with the carriage absolutely filled with flowers: gentians, daffodils, brilliant crimson orchises with yellow spots, pale green ones with crimson spots, lovely asphodels with their transparent white flowers in spikes nearly a yard long, narcissus, blue horned violets, yellow pansies, pink lychnises, white potentillas, and many more.

Mignonette went at once to her room to get water and vases, and when she returned to the sitting-room was at once struck by the gravity of her husband's countenance.

"Edgar! what is it? what has happened?" she exclaimed, dropping her flowers in her anxiety. He put his arm round her.

"You must not be shocked, dear; there has been an accident. Your father is safe,"—as the word "Papa!" rose to her lips—"he telegraphs himself; but Lady Wychwood——"

"Not dead?" said Mignonette, in an awed tone. "Oh, Edgar, poor papa!"

Sir Clement's telegram must have been much delayed, for side by side with it on the table lay a newspaper with an account of the accident. A misunderstood signal, a train turned on to the wrong line of rails, a collision, many injured, three killed—among them Lady Wychwood.

"I should like to go to him at once," said Mignonette.

"Of course, dear; we can start to-night;"

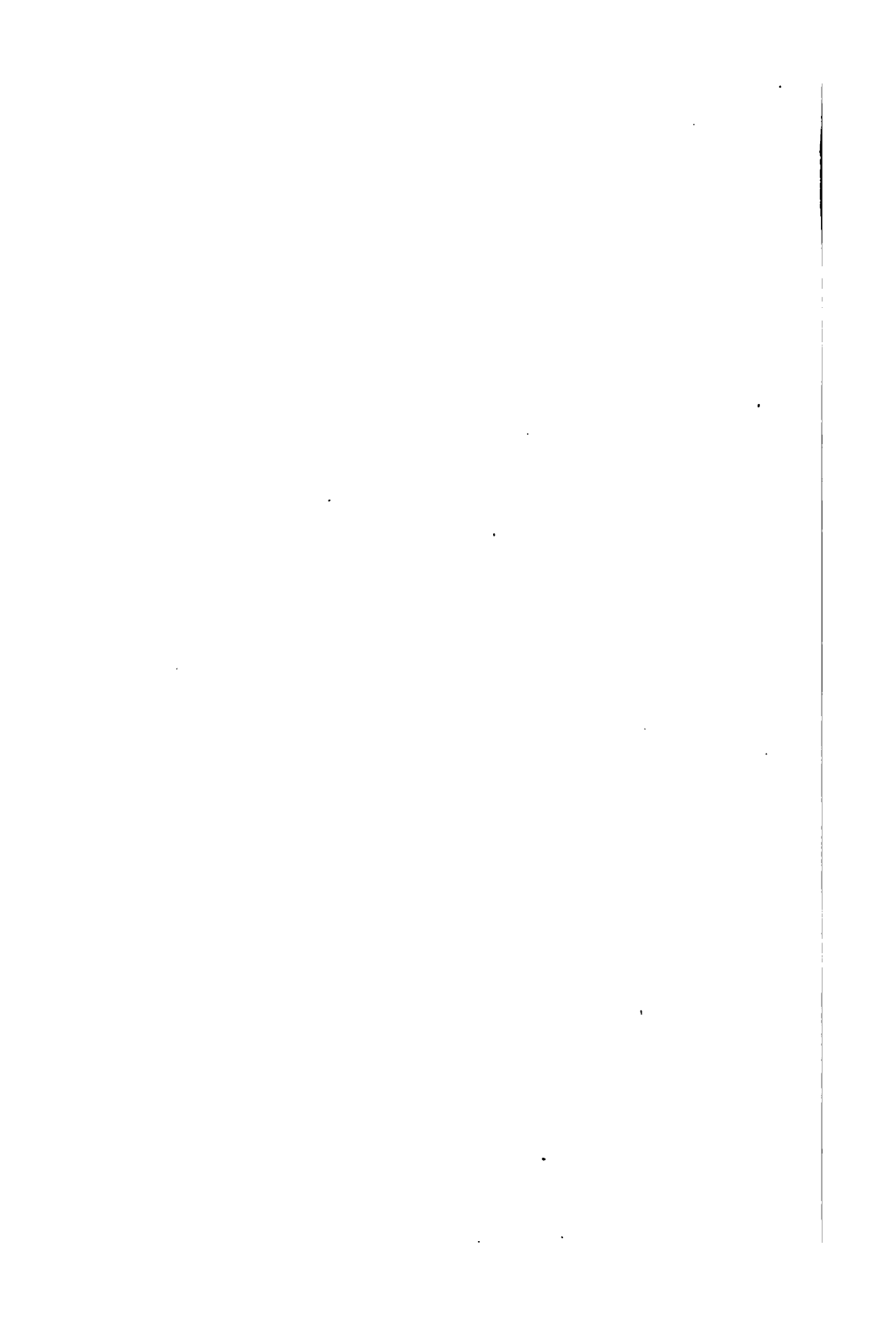
and they made their way to Wychwood with as little delay as possible.

Both Mignonette and her husband were surprised both then and later at Sir Clement's calmness; but not even to them did he ever reveal how it was that Cecilia had lost all hold on his affections.

THE END.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S

LIST OF NEW WORKS.



13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S LIST OF NEW WORKS.

LIFE IN WESTERN INDIA. By Mrs. GUTHRIE,
Author of "Through Russia," "My Year in an Indian Fort," &c.
2 vols. crown 8vo, with Illustrations. 21s.

**CATHARINE OF ARAGON, AND THE SOURCES
OF THE ENGLISH REFORMATION.** Edited, from the French of ALBERT
DU BOIS, with Notes by CHARLOTTE M. YONGE, Author of "The
Heir of Redclyffe," &c. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

OUR HOLIDAY IN THE EAST. By Mrs. GEORGE
SUMNER. Edited by the Rev. G. H. SUMNER, Hon. Canon of Winchester,
Rector of Old Alresford, Hants. 8vo, with Illustrations. 15s.
"Our Holiday in the East' may take its place among the earnest and able
books recording personal travel and impressions in those lands which are conse-
crated to us by their identification with Bible history."—*Daily Telegraph*.
"A most charming narrative of a tour in the East amongst scenes of the deep-
est interest to the Christian. No one can rise from the perusal of this fascinating
volume without the pleasant conviction of having obtained much valuable aid for
the study of the inspired narrative of Our Blessed Lord's life."—*Record*.
"An attractive volume, which is very agreeable reading."—*John Bull*.
"A most interesting and charming book, which will afford readers both instruc-
tion and amusement."—*Hampshire Chronicle*.

**MY JOURNEY ROUND THE WORLD, via
CEYLON, NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIA, TORRES STRAITS, CHINA,
JAPAN, AND THE UNITED STATES.** By CAPTAIN S. H. JONES-PARRY,
late 102nd Royal Madras Fusiliers. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.
"A very pleasant book of travel, well worth reading."—*Spectator*.
"A readable book, light, pleasant, and chatty."—*Globe*.
"A lively account of the author's experiences ashore and afloat, which is well
worth reading."—*Daily News*.
"It is pleasant to follow Captain Jones-Parry on his journey round the world.
He is full of life, sparkle, sunlight, and anecdote."—*Graphic*.
"A thoroughly entertaining book of travel. It is a book that should be read by
everyone."—*Home News for India*.

**MONSIEUR GUIZOT IN PRIVATE LIFE (1787-
1874).** By His Daughter, Madame DE WITT. Translated by Mrs.
SIMPSON. 1 vol. demy 8vo. 15s.
"Madame de Witt has done justice to her father's memory in an admirable re-
cord of his life. Mrs. Simpson's translation of this singularly interesting book is
in accuracy and grace worthy of the original and of the subject."—*Saturday Review*.
"This book was well worth translating. Mrs. Simpson has written excellent
English, while preserving the spirit of the French."—*The Times*.
"M. Guizot stands out in the pages of his daughter's excellent biography a dis-
tinct and life-like figure. He is made to speak to us in his own person. The best
part of the book consists of a number of his letters, in which he freely unfolds his
feelings and opinions, and draws with unconscious boldness the outlines of his
forceful and striking character."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.
"This work is replete with interesting reminiscences, and the reading public
may be congratulated on having a literary treat provided for them. It shows M.
Guizot in the light of a most agreeable companion and capital correspondent, with
a mind as capable of feeling interested in the little pleasure of society as in the
great affairs of State. His descriptions of the life he passed in England during
his last visit to this country are as lively as graphic."—*Globe*.

18, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S NEW WORKS—*Continued.*

ROYAL WINDSOR. By W. HEPWORTH DIXON.

Second Edition. Volumes I. and II. Demy 8vo. 30s.

CONTENTS OF VOLS. I. AND II.—Castle Hill, Norman Keep, First King's House, Lion Heart, Kingless Windsor, Windsor Won, Geoffrey Plantagenet, Windsor Lost, The Fallen Deputy, The Queen Mother, Maud de Braose, The Barons' War, Second King's House, Edward of Carnarvon, Perot de Gaveston, Isabel de France, Edward of Windsor, Crecy, Patron Saints, St. George, Society of St. George, Lady Salisbury, David King of Scots, Third King's House, Ballad Windsor, The Fair Countess, Richard of Bordeaux, Court Parties, Royal Favourites, Rehearsing for Windsor, In the Great Hall, Simon de Burley, Radcote Bridge, A Feast of Death, Geoffrey Chaucer, At Winchester Tower, St. George's Chapel, The Little Queen, At Windsor, Duchess Philippote, The Windsor Plot, Bollingbroke, Court of Chivalry, Wager of Battle, Captive Little Queen, A New Year's Plot, Night of the Kings, Dona Juana, Constance of York, The Norman Tower, The Legal Heir, Prince Hal, The Devil's Tower, In Captivity Captive, Attempt at Beecoe, Agincourt, Kaiser Sigismund, The Witch Queen, Sweet Kate, The Maid of Honour, Lady Jane, Henry of Windsor, Richard of York, Two Duchesses, York and Lancaster, Union of the Roses.

"'Royal Windsor' follows in the same line as 'Her Majesty's Tower,' and aims at weaving a series of popular sketches of striking events which centre round Windsor Castle. Mr. Dixon makes everything vivid and picturesque. Those who liked 'Her Majesty's Tower' will find these volumes equally pleasant."—*Athenaeum*.

"A truly fine and interesting book. It is a valuable contribution to English history; worthy of Mr. Dixon's fame, worthy of its grand subject."—*Morning Post*.

"Mr. Dixon has supplied us with a highly entertaining book. 'Royal Windsor' is eminently a popular work, bristling with anecdotes and amusing sketches of historical characters. It is carefully written, and is exceedingly pleasant reading. The story is brightly told; not a dull page can be found."—*Examiner*.

"These volumes will find favour with the widest circle of readers. From the first days of Norman Windsor to the Plantagenet period Mr. Dixon tells the story of this famous castle in his own picturesque, bright, and vigorous way."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"Mr. Hepworth Dixon has found a congenial subject in 'Royal Windsor.' Under the sanction of the Queen, he has enjoyed exceptional opportunities of most searching and complete investigation of the Royal House and every other part of Windsor Castle, in and out, above ground and below ground."—*Daily News*.

VOLS. III. AND IV. OF ROYAL WINDSOR. By

W. HEPWORTH DIXON. *Second Edition.* Demy 8vo. 30s. Completing the Work.

CONTENTS OF VOLS. III. AND IV.—St. George's Hall, The Tudor Tower, A Windsor Comedy, The Secret Room, Treaties of Windsor, The Private Stair, Disgracing a Knight, In a King's House, The Maiden's Tower, Black Days, The Virgin Bride, Elegy on Windsor, Fair Geraldine, Course of Song, A Windsor Gospeller, Windsor Martyrs, A Royal Reference, Hatchment Down, The People's Friend, St. George's Enemy, Lady Elizabeth's Grace, Queen Mary, Grand Master of St. George, Deanery and Dean, Sister Temperance, Elizabeth's Lovers, Dudley Constable, The Schoolmaster, Peace, Proclaimed, Shakespeare's Windsor, The Two Shakespeares, The Merry Wives, Good Queen Bess, House of Stuart, The Little Park, The Queen's Court, The King's Knights, Spurious Peace, King Christian, A Catholic Dean, Apostasy, Expulsion, Forest Rights, Book of Sports, Windsor Cross, In the Forest, Windsor Seized, Under the Keep, At Bay, Feudal Church, Roundheads, Cavalier Prisoners, The New Model, Last Days of Royalty, Saints in Council, Changing Sides, Bagshot Lodge, Cutting Down, Windsor Uncrowned, A "Merry" Caesar, Windsor Catholic, The Catastrophe, Domestic Life, Home.

"Readers of all classes will feel a genuine regret to think that these volumes contain the last of Mr. Dixon's vivid and lively sketches of English history. His hand retained its cunning to the last, and these volumes show an increase in force and dignity."—*Athenaeum*.

"Mr. Dixon's is the picturesque way of writing history. Scene after scene is brought before us in the most effective way. His book is not only pleasant reading but full of information."—*Graphic*.

18, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S NEW WORKS—*Continued.*

CONVERSATIONS WITH DISTINGUISHED PERSONS

during the Second Empire, from 1860 to 1868. By the Late NASSAU W. SENIOR. Edited by his Daughter, M. C. M. SIMPSON. 2 vols. 8vo. 30s.

Among other persons whose conversations are given in these volumes are:—Prince Napoleon; the Duc de Broglie; the Marquises Chambrun, Lestayrie, Pallavicini, Vogué; Marshal Randon; Counts Arrivabene, Circourt, Corcelle, Kergorlay, Montalembert, Rémusat, Zamoyski; Generals Changarnier, Fénélon, Trochu; Lords Cowley and Clyde; Messieurs Ampère, Beaumont, Chambol, Chevalier, Cousin, Dayton, Drouyn de Lhuys, Duchâtel, Dufaure, Dumon, Duvergier de Hauranne, Guizot, Lamartine, Loménie, Lavergne, Lanjuinais, Maury, Marochetti, Masson, Mérimée, Odillon Barrot, Pelletan, Pietri, Rénan, St. Hilaire, Sildell, Thiers, De Witt; Mesdames Circourt, Cornu, Mohl, &c.

"Mr. Senior's 'Conversations with M. Thiers, M. Guizot,' &c., published about a year and a half ago, were the most interesting volumes of the series which had appeared up to that time, and these new 'Conversations' are hardly, if at all, less welcome and important. A large part of this delightful book is made up of studies by various critics, from divers points of view, of the character of Louis Napoleon, and of more or less vivid and accurate explanations of his tortuous policy. The work contains a few extremely interesting reports of conversations with M. Thiers. There are some valuable reminiscences of Lamartine, and among men of a somewhat later day, of Prince Napoleon, Drouyn de Lhuys, Montalembert, Victor Cousin, Rénan, and the Chevallera."—*Athenæum*.

"It is impossible to do justice to these 'Conversations' in a brief notice, so we must be content to refer our readers to volumes which, wherever they are opened, will be found pregnant with interest."—*The Times*.

"Many readers may prefer the dramatic or literary merit of Mr. Senior's 'Conversations' to their historical interest, but it is impossible to insert extracts of such length as to represent the spirit, the finish, and the variety of a book which is throughout entertaining and instructive."—*Saturday Review*.

CONVERSATIONS WITH M. THIERS, M. GUIZOT,

and other Distinguished Persons, during the Second Empire. By the Late NASSAU W. SENIOR. Edited by his Daughter, M. C. M. SIMPSON. 2 vols. demy 8vo. 30s.

Among other persons whose conversations are recorded in these volumes are:—King Leopold; the Duc de Broglie; Lord Cowley; Counts Arrivabene, Corcelle, Daru, Flahault, Kergorlay, Montalembert; Generals Lamoricière and Chrzanowski; Sir Henry Ellis; Messieurs Ampère, Beaumont, Blanchard, Buffet, Auguste Chevalier, Victor Cousin, De Witt, Duchâtel, Duquetiaux, Dumon, Dussard, Duvergier de Hauranne, Léon Faucher, Frère-Orban, Grimblot, Guizot, Laffitte, Lebaume, Lamartine, Lanjuinais, Mallat, Manin, Mérimée, Mignet, Jules Mohl, Montanelli, Odillon-Barrot, Quételet, Rémusat, Rogier, Rivet, Rossini, Horace Say, Thiers, Trouvé-Chauvel, Villemain, Wolowski; Mesdames Circourt, Cornu, Ristori, &c.

"This new series of Mr. Senior's 'Conversations' has been for some years past known in manuscript to his more intimate friends, and it has always been felt that no former series would prove more valuable or important. Mr. Senior had a social position which gave him admission into the best literary and political circles of Paris. He was a cultivated and sensible man, who knew how to take full advantage of such an opening. And above all, he had by long practice so trained his memory as to enable it to recall all the substance, and often the words, of the long conversations which he was always holding. These conversations he wrote down with a surprising accuracy, and then handed the manuscript to his friends, that they might correct or modify his report of what they had said. This book thus contains the opinions of eminent men given in the freedom of conversation, and afterwards carefully revised. Of their value there cannot be a question. The book is one of permanent historical interest. There is scarcely a page without some memorable statement by some memorable man. Politics and society and literature—the three great interests that make up life—are all discussed in turn, and there is no discussion which is unproductive of weighty thought or striking fact."—*Athenæum*.

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S
NEW WORKS—Continued.

HISTORY OF TWO QUEENS: CATHARINE
OF ARAGON and ANNE BOLEYN. By W. HEPWORTH DIXON.
Second Edition. Vols. 1 & 2. Demy 8vo. 30s.

"In two handsome volumes Mr. Dixon here gives us the first instalment of a new historical work on a most attractive subject. The book is in many respects a favourable specimen of Mr. Dixon's powers. It is the most painstaking and elaborate that he has yet written. . . . On the whole, we may say that the book is one which will sustain the reputation of its author as a writer of great power and versatility, that it gives a new aspect to many an old subject, and presents in a very striking light some of the most recent discoveries in English history."—*Athenæum*.

"In these volumes the author exhibits in a signal manner his special powers and finest endowments. It is obvious that the historian has been at especial pains to justify his reputation, to strengthen his hold upon the learned, and also to extend his sway over the many who prize an attractive style and interesting narrative more highly than laborious research and philosophic insight."—*Morning Post*.

"The thanks of all students of English history are due to Mr. Hepworth Dixon for his clever and original work, 'History of two Queens.' The book is a valuable contribution to English history."—*Daily News*.

VOLS. III. & IV. OF THE HISTORY OF TWO
QUEENS: CATHARINE OF ARAGON and ANNE BOLEYN.
By W. HEPWORTH DIXON. *Second Edition.* Demy 8vo. Price 30s.
Completing the Work.

"These concluding volumes of Mr. Dixon's 'History of two Queens' will be perceived with keen interest by thousands of readers. Whilst no less valuable to the student, they will be far more enthralling to the general reader than the earlier half of the history. Every page of what may be termed Anne Boleyn's story affords a happy illustration of the author's vivid and picturesque style. The work should be found in every library."—*Post*.

HISTORY OF WILLIAM PENN, Founder of
Pennsylvania. By W. HEPWORTH DIXON. A NEW LIBRARY EDITION
1 vol. demy 8vo, with Portrait. 12s.

"Mr. Dixon's 'William Penn' is, perhaps, the best of his books. He has now revised and issued it with the addition of much fresh matter. It is now offered in a sumptuous volume, matching with Mr. Dixon's recent books, to a new generation of readers, who will thank Mr. Dixon for his interesting and instructive memoir of one of the worthies of England."—*Examiner*.

VOLS. III. & IV. OF HER MAJESTY'S TOWER.
By W. HEPWORTH DIXON. DEDICATED BY EXPRESS
PERMISSION TO THE QUEEN. Completing the Work. *Third*
Edition. Demy 8vo. 30s.

FREE RUSSIA. By W. HEPWORTH DIXON. *Third*
Edition. 2 vols. 8vo, with Coloured Illustrations. 30s.

"Mr. Dixon's book will be certain not only to interest but to please its readers and it deserves to do so. It contains a great deal that is worthy of attention, and is likely to produce a very useful effect."—*Saturday Review*.

THE SWITZERS. By W. HEPWORTH DIXON.
Third Edition. 1 vol. demy 8vo. 15s.

"A lively, interesting, and altogether novel book on Switzerland. It is full of valuable information on social, political, and ecclesiastical questions, and, like all Mr. Dixon's books, is eminently readable."—*Daily News*.

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S NEW WORKS—*Continued.*

PLAYS, PLAYERS, AND PLAYHOUSES, AT

HOME AND ABROAD; WITH ANECDOTES OF THE DRAMA AND THE STAGE. By LORD WILLIAM PITT LENNOX. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

"Lord William Lennox's gossiping volumes will be read with great interest. They embrace notes concerning Peg Woffington, Mrs. Jordan, G. F. Cooke, the Infant Roscius, T. P. Cooke, Mrs. Honey, Romeo Coates, Alfred Bunn, the Kembles, Edmund Kean, Liston, Braham, Young, Grimaldi, Mrs. Billington, Morton, Colman, Planché, Sheridan Knowles, Theodore Hook, Mark Lemon, Palgrave Simpson, Byron, Burnand, Arthur Cecil Toole, Corney Grain, Irving, and many others. A vast amount of curious information and anecdote has been gathered together in these pleasant, readable volumes."—*Sunday Times*.

"These volumes are full of good stories and anecdotes, told with remarkable spirit, and will be a treasure to playgoers."—*Graphic*.

"The lover of the stage will find a host of interesting and amusing passages, let him dip into these volumes wherever he will."—*Era*.

TALES OF OUR GREAT FAMILIES. *Second*

Series. By EDWARD WALFORD, M.A. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

CONTENTS:—The Old Countess of Desmond, The Edgumbes of Edgumbe and Cothele, The Lynches of Galway, A Cadet of the Plantagenets, The Proud Duke of Somerset, Lady Killyth, The Dalzells of Carnwath, The Ladies of Llangollen, The Foxes, The Stuarths of Traquair, Belted Will Howard, An Episode in the House of Dundonald, The Ducal House of Hamilton, The Chief of Dundas, The Duke of Chandos and Princely Canons, The Spencers and Comptons, All the Howards, The Lockharts of Lee, A Ghost Story in the Noble House of Beresford, A Tragedy in Pall Mall, An Eccentric Russell, The Lady of Lathom House, Two Royal Marriages in the Last Century, The Boyles, The Merry Duke of Montagu, The Romance of the Earldom of Huntingdon, Lady Hester Stanhope, The Countess of Nithsdale, The Romance of the Earldom of Mar, Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, Lord Northington, The Cutlers of Westworth, The Earldom of Bridgewater, The Carews of Beddington, A Chapter on the Peerage, The Kirkpatrickes of Closeburn, The Cliffords Earls of Cumberland, The Homes of Polwarth, The Ducal House of Bedford, Tragedies of the House of Innes, The Ducal House of Leinster, The Royal House of Stuart, The Great Douglas Case, The Radcliffes of Derwentwater, The Rise of the House of Hardwicke, Field-Marshal Keith.

"The social rank of the persons whose lives and characters are delineated in this work and the inherent romance of the stories it embodies will ensure it a widespread popularity. Many of the papers possess an engrossing and popular interest, while all of them may be read with pleasure and profit."—*Examiner*.

DIARY OF A TOUR IN SWEDEN, NORWAY,

AND RUSSIA, IN 1827. By THE MARCHIONESS OF WESTMINSTER.

1 vol. demy 8vo. 15s.

"A bright and lively record. So pleasantly are the letters written which Lady Westminster sent home, that her book is most agreeable; and it has this special merit, that it brings clearly before us a number of the great people of former days, royal and imperial personages, whose intimate acquaintance the traveller's rank enabled her to make."—*Athenæum*.

"A very agreeable and instructive volume."—*Saturday Review*.

"A highly instructive book of interesting travel, replete with graphic sketches of social life and scenery, abounding with entertaining anecdotes."—*Court Journal*.

HOLIDAYS IN EASTERN FRANCE; Sketches

of Travel in CHAMPAGNE, FRANCHE-COMTE, the JURA, the VALLEY of the DOUBS, &c. By M. BETHAM-EDWARDS. 8vo. Illustrations. 15s.

"Miss Edwards' present volume, written in the same pleasant style as that which described her wanderings in Western France, is so much the more to be recommended that its contents are fresher and more novel."—*Saturday Review*.

"Readers of this work will find plenty of fresh information about some of the most delightful parts of France. The descriptions of scenery are as graphic as the sketches of character are lifelike."—*Globe*.

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S
NEW WORKS—*Continued.*

THE VILLAGE OF PALACES; or, Chronicles of

Chelsea. By the Rev. A. G. L'ESTRANGE. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

"Mr. L'Estrange has much to tell of the various public institutions associated with Chelsea. Altogether his volumes show some out-of-the-way research, and are written in a lively and gossiping style."—*The Times*.

"These volumes are pleasantly written and fairly interesting."—*Athenæum*.

"Mr. L'Estrange tells us much that is interesting about Chelsea. We take leave of this most charming book with a hearty recommendation of it to our readers."—*Spectator*.

"One of the best gossiping topographies since Leigh Hunt's 'Old Court Suburb.' So many persons of note have lived in Chelsea that a book far less carefully compiled than this has been could not fail to be amusing."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"This is a work of light antiquarian, biographical, and historical gossip. Mr. L'Estrange is inspired by interest in his subject."—*Daily News*.

"Every inhabitant of Chelsea will welcome this remarkably interesting work. It sheds a flood of light upon the past; and, while avoiding the heaviness of most antiquarian works, gives, in the form of a popular and amusing sketch, a complete history of this 'Village of Palaces.'"—*Chelsea News*.

AN ACTOR ABROAD; or, GOSSIP, DRAMATIC,

NARRATIVE, AND DESCRIPTIVE: From the Recollections of an Actor in Australia, New Zealand, the Sandwich Islands, California, Nevada, Central America, and New York. By EDMUND LEATHES. Demy 8vo. 15s.

"'An Actor Abroad' is a bright and pleasant volume—an eminently readable book. Mr. Leathes has the great merit of being never dull. He has the power of telling a story clearly and pointedly."—*Saturday Review*.

"A readable, gossiping, agreeable record of the chances and changes of an actor's career in far distant lands. Many of the sketches of character display considerable literary skill."—*Era*.

"A very readable book. It is a combination of the experiences of the voyager with those of the artist."—*Academy*.

THE YOUTH OF QUEEN ELIZABETH. Edited,

from the French of L. WIESENER, by CHARLOTTE M. YONGE, Author of 'The Heir of Redclyffe,' &c. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

"M. Wiesener is to be complimented on the completeness, accuracy, and research shown in this work. He has drawn largely on the French Archives, the Public Record Office, and British Museum, for information contained in original documents, to some of which notice is directed for the first time. M. Wiesener's work is well worth translating, for it is most interesting as showing the education and circumstances which tended to form the character of that extraordinary queen. Miss Yonge appears to have successfully accomplished the task which she has undertaken."—*Athenæum*.

RORAIMA AND BRITISH GUIANA, with a

Glance at Bermuda, the West Indies, and the Spanish Main. By J. W. BODDAM-WHETHAM. 8vo. With Map and Illustrations. 15s.

"The author has succeeded in producing an interesting and readable book of travels. His remarks on every-day life in the tropics, his notes on the geography and natural history of the countries he visited, and, above all, his vivid descriptions of scenery, combine to form a record of adventure which in attractiveness it will not be easy to surpass."—*Athenæum*.

"Mr. Whetham writes with vigour, and describes the life in the forests and on the rivers and prairies of South America with a picturesqueness and freshness of interest not inferior to that of the late Mr. Waterton's immortal wanderings. Mr. Whetham travelled in portions of Guiana little known, meeting with many adventures, seeing many strange sights, and taking notes which have furnished matter for a book of fascinating interest."—*Daily News*.

18, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S NEW WORKS—*Continued.*

ROUND THE WORLD IN SIX MONTHS. By

LIEUT.-COLONEL E. S. BRIDGES, Grenadier Guards. 1 vol. 8vo. 15s.

"The author may be congratulated on his success, for his pages are light and pleasant. The volume will be found both amusing and useful."—*Athenæum*.

"Colonel Bridges' book has the merit of being lively and readable. His advice to future travellers may be found serviceable."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

A LEGACY: Being the Life and Remains of JOHN

MARTIN, Schoolmaster and Poet. Written and Edited by the

Author of "JOHN HALIFAX." 2 vols. crown 8vo. With Portrait. 21s.

"A remarkable book. It records the life, work, aspirations, and death of a schoolmaster and poet, of lowly birth but ambitious soul. His writings brim with vivid thought, touches of poetic sentiment, and trenchant criticism of men and books, expressed in scholarly language."—*Guardian*.

"Mrs. Craik has related a beautiful and pathetic story—a story of faith and courage on the part of a young and gifted man, who might under other circumstances have won a place in literature. The story is one worth reading."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

LIFE OF MOSCHELES; WITH SELECTIONS FROM

HIS DIARIES AND CORRESPONDENCE. By HIS WIFE.

2 vols. large post 8vo, with Portrait. 24s.

"This life of Moscheles will be a valuable book of reference for the musical historian, for the contents extend over a period of threescore years, commencing with 1794, and ending at 1870. We need scarcely state that all the portions of Moscheles' diary which refer to his intercourse with Beethoven, Hummel, Weber, Czerny, Spontini, Rossini, Auber, Halévy, Schumann, Cherubini, Spohr, Mendelssohn, F. David, Chopin, J. B. Cramer, Clementi, John Field, Habeneck, Hauptmann, Kalkbrenner, Klessewetter, C. Klingemann, Lablache, Dragonetti, Sontag, Persiani, Malibran, Paganini, Rachel, Ronzi de Begnis, De Beriot, Ernst, Donzell, Cinti-Damoreau, Chelard, Boches, Laporte, Charles Kemble, Paton (Mrs. Wood), Schröder-Devrient, Mrs. Siddons, Sir H. Bishop, Sir G. Smart, Standigl, Thalberg, Berlioz, Velluti, C. Young, Balfé, Braham, and many other artists of note in their time, will recall a flood of recollections. It was a delicate task for Madame Moscheles to select from the diaries in reference to living persons, but her extracts have been judiciously made. Moscheles writes fairly of what is called the 'Music of the Future' and its disciples, and his judgments on Herr Wagner, Dr. Liszt, Rubenstein, Dr. von Bülow, Litolf, &c., whether as composers or exponents, are in a liberal spirit. He recognizes cheerfully the talents of our native artists; Sir S. Bennett, Mr. Macfarren, Madame Goddard, Mr. J. Barnett, Mr. Hullah, Mr. A. Sullivan, &c. The volumes are full of amusing anecdotes."—*Athenæum*.

HISTORIC CHATEAUX: BLOIS, FONTAINEBLEAU,

VINGENNES. By LORD LAMINGTON. 1 vol. 8vo. 15s.

"A very interesting volume."—*Times*.

"A lively and agreeable book, full of action and colour."—*Athenæum*.

CELEBRITIES I HAVE KNOWN. By LORD

WILLIAM PITT LENNOX. *Second Series*. 2 volumes demy 8vo. 30s.

"This new series of Lord William Lennox's reminiscences is fully as entertaining as the preceding one. Lord William makes good use of an excellent memory, and he writes easily and pleasantly."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

COACHING; With ANECDOTES OF THE ROAD. By

LORD WILLIAM PITT LENNOX. Dedicated to His Grace the

DUKE OF BEAUFORT, K.G., President, and the Members of the Coaching Club. 1 vol. demy 8vo. 15s.

"Lord William's book is genial, discursive, and gossipy. We are indebted to the author's personal recollections for some lively stories, and pleasant sketches of some of the more famous dragsmen. Altogether his volume, with the variety of its contents, will be found pleasant reading."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S
NEW WORKS—*Continued.*

WORDS OF HOPE AND COMFORT TO
THOSE IN SORROW. Dedicated by Permission to THE QUEEN.
Fourth Edition. 1 vol. small 4to, 5s. bound.

"These letters, the work of a pure and devout spirit, deserve to find many readers. They are greatly superior to the average of what is called religious literature."—*Athenaeum*.

"The writer of the tenderly-conceived letters in this volume was Mrs. Julius Hare, a sister of Mr. Maurice. They are instinct with the devout submissiveness and fine sympathy which we associate with the name of Maurice; but in her there is added a winningness of tact, and sometimes, too, a directness of language, which we hardly find even in the brother. The letters were privately printed and circulated, and were found to be the source of much comfort, which they cannot fail to afford now to a wide circle. A sweetly-conceived memorial poem, bearing the well-known initials, 'E. H. P.', gives a very faithful outline of the life."—*British Quarterly Review*.

"This touching and most comforting work is dedicated to THE QUEEN, who took a gracious interest in its first appearance, when printed for private circulation, and found comfort in its pages, and has now commanded its publication, that the world in general may profit by it. A more practical and heart-stirring appeal to the afflicted we have never examined."—*Standard*.

A YOUNG SQUIRE OF THE SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY, from the Papers of CHRISTOPHER JEAFFRESON, of Dulingham House, Cambridgeshire. Edited by JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON, Author of "A Book about Doctors," &c. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

"Two agreeable and important volumes. They deserve to be placed on library shelves with Pepys, Evelyn, and Baresby."—*Notes and Queries*.

OUR BISHOPS AND DEANS. By the Rev. F.
ARNOLD, B.A., late of Christ Church, Oxford. 2 vols. 8vo. 30s.

"This work is good in conception and cleverly executed, and as thoroughly honest and earnest as it is interesting and able."—*John Bull*.

LIFE OF THE RT. HON. SPENCER PERCEVAL;
Including His Correspondence. By His Grandson, SPENCER WAL-
POLE. 2 vols. 8vo. With Portrait. 30s.

"This biography will take rank, as a faithful reflection of the statesman and his period, as also for its philosophic, logical, and dramatic completeness."—*Post*.

THE SEA OF MOUNTAINS: AN ACCOUNT OF
LORD DUFFERIN'S TOUR THROUGH BRITISH COLUMBIA IN 1876. By
MOLYNEUX ST. JOHN. 2 vols. With Portrait of Lord Dufferin. 21s.

"Mr. St. John has given us in these pages a record of all that was seen and done in a very successful visit. His book is instructive, and it should be interesting to the general reader."—*Times*.

"Mr. St. John is a shrewd and lively writer. The reader will find ample variety in his book, which is well worth perusal."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

THE THEATRE FRANCAIS IN THE REIGN
OF LOUIS XV. By LORD LAMINGTON. 1 vol. demy 8vo. 15s.

"A most valuable contribution to dramatic literature. All members of the profession should read it."—*Morning Post*.

MY YOUTH, BY SEA AND LAND, FROM 1809 TO
1816. By CHARLES LOFTUS, formerly of the Royal Navy,
late of the Coldstream Guards. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

"A more genial, pleasant, wholesome book we have not often read."—*Standard*.

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S
NEW WORKS—*Continued.*

LONDONIANA. By EDWARD WALFORD, M.A.,
Author of "The County Families," &c. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.
"A highly interesting and entertaining book. It bristles with anecdotes and
amusing sketches."—*Court Journal.*

MEMOIRS OF GEORGIANA, LADY CHATTER-
TON; With some Passages from her Diary. By E. HENEAGE
DERING. 1 vol. demy 8vo. 15s.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH HUMOUR. By the
Rev. A. G. L'ESTRANGE. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

ACROSS CENTRAL AMERICA. By J. W. BOD-
DAM-WHETHAM. 8vo. With Illustrations. 15s.

A MAN OF OTHER DAYS: Recollections of the
MARQUIS DE BEAUREGARD. Edited, from the French, by CHARLOTTE
M. YONGE, Author of "The Heir of Redclyffe," &c. 2 vols. 21s.

MY YEAR IN AN INDIAN FORT. By Mrs.
GUTHRIE. 2 vols. crown 8vo. With Illustrations. 21s.

RECOLLECTIONS OF COLONEL DE GONNE-
VILLE. Edited from the French by CHARLOTTE M. YONGE,
Author of the "Heir of Redclyffe," &c. 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

THROUGH FRANCE AND BELGIUM, BY
RIVER AND CANAL, IN THE STEAM YACHT "YTENE."
By W. J. C. MOENS, R.V.Y.O. 1 vol. 8vo. With Illustrations. 15s.

MY LIFE, FROM 1815 TO 1849. By CHARLES LOFTUS,
formerly of the Royal Navy, late of the Coldstream Guards.
Author of "My Youth by Sea and Land." 2 vols. crown 8vo. 21s.

A BOOK ABOUT THE TABLE. By J. C.
JEAFFRESON. 2 vols. 8vo. 30s.

COSITAS ESPANOLAS; OR, EVERY-DAY LIFE IN
SPAIN. By Mrs. HARVEY, of Ickwell-Bury. 2nd Edition. 8vo. 15s.

PEARLS OF THE PACIFIC. By J. W. BODDAM-
WHETHAM. 1 vol. demy 8vo, with 8 Illustrations. 15s.

TURKISH HAREMS & CIRCASSIAN HOMES.
By Mrs. HARVEY, of Ickwell-Bury. 8vo. Second Edition. 15s.

MEMOIRS OF QUEEN HORTENSE, MOTHER
OF NAPOLEON III. Cheaper Edition, in 1 vol. 6s.

RECOLLECTIONS OF SOCIETY IN FRANCE
AND ENGLAND. By LADY CLEMENTINA DAVIES. 2nd Edition. 2 v.

THE EXILES AT ST. GERMAINS. By the
Author of "The Ladye Shakerley." 1 vol. 7s. 6d. bound.

THE NEW AND POPULAR NOVELS.

PUBLISHED BY HURST & BLACKETT.

SYDNEY. By **GEORGIANA M. CRAIK**, Author of
"Dorcas," "Anne Warwick," &c. 3 vols.

AMONG THE HILLS. By **E. FRANCES POYNTER**,
Author of "My Little Lady," &c. 2 vols.

THE FUTURE MARQUIS. By **CATHARINE**
CHILDAR. 3 vols.

BESIDE THE RIVER. By **Mrs. MACQUOID**, Author
of "Patty," "In the Sweet Spring Time," &c. 3 vols.

"A bright and pleasant story."—*St. James's Gazette*.

"We are inclined to rank this as the best of Mrs. Macquoid's novels. Her stories are always entertaining."—*Academy*.

"This book is well worthy of being read. It is full of invention, and not a little discrimination of character."—*British Quarterly Review*.

LOVE-KNOTS. By the Author of "Ursula's Love
Story," "Under Temptation," &c. 3 vols.

"There is a good deal of interest in these cleverly-knitted 'love-knots.'"—*Athenæum*.

"A pleasant, healthy novel, full of life and spirit. It will secure a large number of readers."—*Sunday Times*.

MISSING! By **MARY CECIL HAY**, Author of "Old
Myddelton's Money," &c. 3 vols.

"Miss Hay has put some of her best work into these volumes."—*Sunday Times*.

HER DESERTS. By **Mrs. ALEXANDER FRASER.**
Second Edition. 3 vols.

"'Her Deserts' is a striking novel, which cannot fail to engross all readers, and will probably be one of the most attractive of its author's works."—*Morning Post*.

"A powerful book. It is of a decidedly sensational character, and yet there is plenty of the pleasanter side of life throughout the story. Beautiful, passionate Gina takes a distinct place amid the heroines of fiction."—*Sunday Times*.

BERYL FORTESCUE. By **LADY DUFFUS HARDY**,
Author of "Madge," &c. 3 vols.

"This story can be read with unusual interest."—*St. James's Gazette*.

"An extremely interesting and original story, which it is almost impossible to lay down before completion."—*Post*.

IDONEA. By **ANNE BEALE**, Author of "Fay
Arlington," &c. 3 vols.

"A refined and pleasant novel. A more comprehensive, well-balanced, and original plot has rarely been invented."—*Messenger*.

"Miss Beale's novel cannot fail to be attractive to the reader. The plot is interesting, and the characters are well delineated."—*Court Journal*.

JEANNETTE. By **MARY C. ROWSELL**, Author of
"Love Loyal," &c. 3 vols.

"'Jeannette' is a love-story replete with deep interest and admirably told, which engrosses the attention to the last page."—*Court Journal*.

LITTLE PANSY. By **Mrs. RANDOLPH**, Author of
"Gentianella," &c. 3 vols.

"This novel is sure to be popular. It is a most amusing story. Little Pansy is a charming creature."—*Sunday Times*.

THE NEW AND POPULAR NOVELS.

PUBLISHED BY HURST & BLACKETT.

HARRY JOSCELYN. By Mrs. OLIPHANT, Author of "Chronicles of Carlingford," &c. 3 vols.

"This book is very clever and entertaining. The characters are good, and every page abounds in those little touches of true and subtle observation in which Mrs. Oliphant excels."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"Mrs. Oliphant presents in these volumes a succession of studies, worked out with great care, and evidencing her own peculiar skill."—*Saturday Review*.

"There are chapters and passages in 'Harry Josceyn' that may rank with some of the best from Mrs. Oliphant's pen. The portraits of Joan and Ralph Josceyn are admirable."—*St. James's Gazette*.

HIS LITTLE MOTHER, and Other Tales and

Sketches. By the Author of "JOHN HALIFAX." 1 vol. 10s. 6d.

"This is an interesting book, written in a pleasant manner, and full of shrewd observation and kindly feeling. It is a book that will be read with interest, and that cannot be lightly forgotten."—*St. James's Gazette*.

"His Little Mother' is one of those pathetic stories which the author tells better than anybody else."—*John Bull*.

"We cordially recommend 'His Little Mother.' The story is most affecting. The volume is full of lofty sentiments and noble aspirations, and none can help feeling better after its perusal."—*Court Journal*.

STRICTLY TIED UP. By the RIGHT HON. A. J. B.

BERESFORD HOPE, M.P. *Second Edition.* 3 vols.

"A clever story. In 'Strictly Tied Up' we have vigorous sketches of life in very different circumstances and conditions. We have the incisive portraiture of character that shows varied knowledge of mankind. We have a novel, besides, which may be read with profit as well as pleasure, for the author deals occasionally with burning topics of the day."—*The Times*.

"Strictly Tied Up' is entertaining. It is in every sense a novel conceived in a light and happy vein."—*Athenaeum*.

"Strictly Tied Up' is a very cleverly constructed novel, as amusing as it is ingenious."—*St. James's Gazette*.

DIMPLETHORPE. By the Author of "St. Olave's,"

&c. 3 vols.

"Dimplethorpe' is a well-written, ingenious, agreeable, and interesting story. The characters are naturally drawn."—*St. James's Gazette*.

"For quiet humour, careful observation, and cultivated style, 'Dimplethorpe' is equal to any of the author's previous works."—*John Bull*.

FIXED AS FATE. By Mrs. HOUSTOUN, Author of

"Recommended to Mercy," &c. 3 vols.

"Mrs. Houstoun writes in a pleasant and agreeable vein. We have been much interested in her story."—*Academy*.

GERALDINE AND HER SUITORS. By Mrs.

SIMPSON, Author of "Winnie's History," &c. 3 vols.

"A bright, well written novel."—*Spectator*.

"This book is both pleasing to read and pleasing to remember."—*Pall Mall*.

ROY AND VIOLA. By Mrs. FORRESTER, Author

of "Viva," "Mignon," "Dolores," &c. *Third Edition.* 3 vols.

"Roy and Viola' is an admirable tale; told by one who can vividly describe, and incisively comment, on the manners and personnel of modern society."—*The World*.

ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER. By SHIRLEY SMITH,

Author of "His Last Stake," &c. 3 vols.

"A novel of no common merit."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

Under the Especial Patronage of Her Majesty.

Published annually, in One Vol., royal 8vo, with the Arms beautifully engraved, handsomely bound, with gilt edges, price 31s. 6d.

LODGE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE, CORRECTED BY THE NOBILITY.

THE FIFTIETH EDITION FOR 1881 IS NOW READY.

LODGE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE is acknowledged to be the most complete, as well as the most elegant, work of the kind. As an established and authentic authority on all questions respecting the family histories, honours, and connections of the titled aristocracy, no work has ever stood so high. It is published under the especial patronage of Her Majesty, and is annually corrected throughout, from the personal communications of the Nobility. It is the only work of its class in which, *the type being kept constantly standing*, every correction is made in its proper place to the date of publication, an advantage which gives it supremacy over all its competitors. Independently of its full and authentic information respecting the existing Peers and Baronets of the realm, the most sedulous attention is given in its pages to the collateral branches of the various noble families, and the names of many thousand individuals are introduced, which do not appear in other records of the titled classes. For its authority, correctness, and facility of arrangement, and the beauty of its typography and binding, the work is justly entitled to the place it occupies on the tables of Her Majesty and the Nobility.

LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Historical View of the Peerage.
Parliamentary Roll of the House of Lords.
English, Scotch, and Irish Peers, in their orders of Precedence.
Alphabetical List of Peers of Great Britain and the United Kingdom, holding superior rank in the Scotch or Irish Peerage.
Alphabetical List of Scotch and Irish Peers, holding superior titles in the Peerage of Great Britain and the United Kingdom.
A Collective list of Peers, in their order of Precedence.
Table of Precedency among Men.
Table of Precedency among Women.
The Queen and the Royal Family.
Peers of the Blood Royal.
The Peerage, alphabetically arranged.
Families of such Extinct Peers as have left Widows or Issue.
Alphabetical List of the Surnames of all the Peers.

The Archbishops and Bishops of England and Ireland.
The Baronetage alphabetically arranged.
Alphabetical List of Surnames assumed by members of Noble Families.
Alphabetical List of the Second Titles of Peers, usually borne by their Eldest Sons.
Alphabetical Index to the Daughters of Dukes, Marquises, and Earls, who, having married Commoners, retain the title of Lady before their own Christian and their Husband's Surnames.
Alphabetical Index to the Daughters of Viscounts and Barons, who, having married Commoners, are styled Honourable Mrs.; and, in case of the husband being a Baronet or Knight, Hon. Lady.
A List of the Orders of Knighthood.
Mottoes alphabetically arranged and translated.

"This work is the most perfect and elaborate record of the living and recently deceased members of the Peerage of the Three Kingdoms as it stands at this day. It is a most useful publication. We are happy to bear testimony to the fact that scrupulous accuracy is a distinguishing feature of this book."—*Times*.

"Lodge's Peerage must supersede all other works of the kind, for two reasons: first, it is on a better plan; and secondly, it is better executed. We can safely pronounce it to be the readiest, the most useful, and exactest of modern works on the subject."—*Spectator*.

"A work of great value. It is the most faithful record we possess of the aristocracy of the day."—*Post*.

"The best existing, and, we believe, the best possible Peerage. It is the standard authority on the subject."—*Standard*.

HURST & BLACKETT'S STANDARD LIBRARY

OF CHEAP EDITIONS OF

POPULAR MODERN WORKS,

ILLUSTRATED BY SIR J. GILBERT, MILLAIS, HUNT, LEECH, FOSTER,
POYNTER, TENNIEL, SANDYS, HUGHES, SAMBOURNE, &c.

Each in a Single Volume, elegantly printed, bound, and illustrated, price 5s.

1. SAM SLICK'S NATURE AND HUMAN NATURE.

"The first volume of Messrs. Hurst and Blackett's Standard Library of Cheap Editions forms a very good beginning to what will doubtless be a very successful undertaking. 'Nature and Human Nature' is one of the best of Sam Slick's witty and humorous productions, and is well entitled to the large circulation which it cannot fail to obtain in its present convenient and cheap shape. The volume combines with the great recommendations of a clear, bold type, and good paper, the lesser but attractive merits of being well illustrated and elegantly bound."—*Post*.

2. JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.

"This is a very good and a very interesting work. It is designed to trace the career from boyhood to age of a perfect man—a Christian gentleman; and it abounds in incident both well and highly wrought. Throughout it is conceived in a high spirit, and written with great ability. This cheap and handsome new edition is worthy to pass freely from hand to hand as a gift book in many households."—*Examiner*.

3. THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS.

BY ELIOT Warburton.

"Independent of its value as an original narrative, and its useful and interesting information, this work is remarkable for the colouring power and play of fancy with which its descriptions are enlivened. Among its greatest and most lasting charms is its reverent and serious spirit."—*Quarterly Review*.

4. NATHALIE. By JULIA KAVANAGH.

"'Nathalie' is Miss Kavanagh's best imaginative effort. Its manner is gracious and attractive. Its matter is good."—*Athenæum*.

5. A WOMAN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT WOMEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"A book of sound counsel. It is one of the most sensible works of its kind, well-written, true-hearted, and altogether practical. Whoever wishes to give advice to a young lady may thank the author for means of doing so."—*Examiner*.

6. ADAM GRAEME. By MRS. OLIPHANT.

"A story awakening genuine emotions of interest and delight by its admirable pictures of Scottish life and scenery. The author sets before us the essential attributes of Christian virtue, with a delicacy, power, and truth which can hardly be surpassed."—*Post*.

7. SAM SLICK'S WISE SAWS & MODERN INSTANCES.

"The reputation of this book will stand as long as that of Scott's or Bulwer's Novels. Its remarkable originality and happy descriptions of American life still continue the subject of universal admiration."—*Messenger*.

8. CARDINAL WISEMAN'S RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LAST FOUR POPES.

"A picturesque book on Rome and its ecclesiastical sovereigns, by an eloquent Roman Catholic. Cardinal Wiseman has treated a special subject with so much geniality, that his recollections will excite no ill-feeling in those who are most conscientiously opposed to every idea of human infallibility represented in Papal domination."—*Athenæum*.

9. A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"In 'A Life for a Life' the author is fortunate in a good subject, and has produced a work of strong effect."—*Athenæum*.

10. THE OLD COURT SUBURB. By LEIGH HUNT.

"A delightful book, that will be welcome to all readers, and most welcome to those who have a love for the best kinds of reading."—*Examiner*.

HURST & BLACKETT'S STANDARD LIBRARY

11. MARGARET AND HER BRIDESMAIDS.

"We recommend all who are in search of a fascinating novel to read this work for themselves. They will find it well worth their while. There are a freshness and originality about it quite charming."—*Athenæum*.

12. THE OLD JUDGE. By SAM SLICK.

"The publications included in this Library have all been of good quality; many give information while they entertain, and of that class the book before us is a specimen. The manner in which the Cheap Editions forming the series is produced, deserves especial mention. The paper and print are unexceptionable; there is a steel engraving in each volume, and the outside of them will satisfy the purchaser who likes to see books in handsome uniform."—*Examiner*.

13. DARIEN. By ELIOT WARBURTON.

"This last production of the author of 'The Crescent and the Cross' has the same elements of a very wide popularity. It will please its thousands."—*Globe*.

14. FAMILY ROMANCE.

BY SIR BERNARD BURKE, ULSTER KING OF ARMS.

"It were impossible to praise too highly this most interesting book."—*Standard*.

15. THE LAIRD OF NORLAW. By MRS. OLIPHANT

"The 'Laird of Norlaw' fully sustains the author's high reputation."—*Sunday Times*

16. THE ENGLISHWOMAN IN ITALY.

"Mrs. Gretton's book is interesting, and full of opportune instruction."—*Times*.

17. NOTHING NEW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"'Nothing New' displays all those superior merits which have made 'John Halifax' one of the most popular works of the day."—*Post*.

18. FREER'S LIFE OF JEANNE D'ALBRET.

"Nothing can be more interesting than Miss Freer's story of the life of Jeanne D'Albret, and the narrative is as trustworthy as it is attractive."—*Post*.

19. THE VALLEY OF A HUNDRED FIRES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARGARET AND HER BRIDESMAIDS."

"If asked to classify this work, we should give it a place between 'John Halifax' and 'The Caxtons.'"—*Standard*.

20. THE ROMANCE OF THE FORUM.

BY PETER BURKE, SERGEANT AT LAW.

"A work of singular interest, which can never fail to charm."—*Illustrated News*.

21. ADELE. By JULIA KAVANAGH.

"'Adele' is the best work we have read by Miss Kavanagh; it is a charming story, full of delicate character-painting."—*Athenæum*.

22. STUDIES FROM LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"These 'Studies from Life' are remarkable for graphic power and observation. The book will not diminish the reputation of the accomplished author."—*Saturday Review*.

23. GRANDMOTHER'S MONEY.

"We commend Grandmother's Money to readers in search of a good novel. The characters are true to human nature, and the story is interesting."—*Athenæum*.

24. A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS. By J. C. JEAFFRESON.

"A delightful book."—*Athenæum*. "A book to be read and re-read; fit for the study as well as the drawing-room table and the circulating library."—*Lancet*.

HURST & BLACKETT'S STANDARD LIBRARY

25. NO' CHURCH.

"We advise all who have the opportunity to read this book."—*Athenaeum*.

26. MISTRESS AND MAID.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"A good wholesome book, gracefully written, and as pleasant to read as it is instructive."—*Athenaeum*. "A charming tale charmingly told."—*Standard*.

27. LOST AND SAVED. By HON. MRS. NORTON.

"Lost and Saved' will be read with eager interest. It is a vigorous novel."—*Times*. "A novel of rare excellence. It is Mrs. Norton's best prose work."—*Examiner*.

28. LES MISERABLES. By VICTOR HUGO.

AUTHORISED COPYRIGHT ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

"The merits of 'Les Miserables' do not merely consist in the conception of it as a whole; it abounds with details of unequalled beauty. M. Victor Hugo has stamped upon every page the hall-mark of genius."—*Quarterly Review*.

29. BARBARA'S HISTORY. By AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

"It is not often that we light upon a novel of so much merit and interest as 'Barbara's History.' It is a work conspicuous for taste and literary culture. It is a very graceful and charming book, with a well-managed story, clearly-out characters, and sentiments expressed with an exquisite elocution. It is a book which the world will like."—*Times*.

30. LIFE OF THE REV. EDWARD IRVING.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

"A good book on a most interesting theme."—*Times*. "A truly interesting and most affecting memoir. Irving's Life ought to have a niche in every gallery of religious biography."—*Saturday Review*.

31. ST. OLAVE'S.

"This charming novel is the work of one who possesses a great talent for writing, as well as experience and knowledge of the world."—*Athenaeum*.

32. SAM SLICK'S AMERICAN HUMOUR.

"Dip where you will into this lottery of fun, you are sure to draw out a prize."—*Post*.

33. CHRISTIAN'S MISTAKE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"A more charming story has rarely been written. Even if tried by the standard of the Archbishop of York, we should expect that even he would pronounce 'Christian's Mistake' a novel without a fault."—*Times*.

34. ALEC FORBES. By GEORGE MAC DONALD, LL.D.

"No account of this story would give any idea of the profound interest that pervades the work from the first page to the last."—*Athenaeum*.

35. AGNES. By MRS. OLIPHANT.

"Agnes' is a novel superior to any of Mrs. Oliphant's former works."—*Athenaeum*.

"A story whose pathetic beauty will appeal irresistibly to all readers."—*Post*.

36. A NOBLE LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"This is one of those pleasant tales in which the author of 'John Halifax' speaks out of a generous heart the purest truths of life."—*Examiner*.

37. NEW AMERICA. By HEPWORTH DIXON.

"A very interesting book. Mr. Dixon has written thoughtfully and well."—*Times*.

"We recommend every one who feels any interest in human nature to read Mr. Dixon's very interesting book."—*Saturday Review*.

38. ROBERT FALCONER. By GEORGE MAC DONALD.

"Robert Falconer' is a work brimful of life and humour and of the deepest human interest. It is a book to be returned to again and again for the deep and searching knowledge it evinces of human thoughts and feelings."—*Athenaeum*.

HURST & BLACKETT'S STANDARD LIBRARY

39. THE WOMAN'S KINGDOM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"The Woman's Kingdom" sustains the author's reputation as a writer of the purest and noblest kind of domestic stories.—*Athenaeum*.

40. ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

BY GEORGE WEBBE DASENT, D.C.L.

"A racy, well-written, and original novel. The interest never flags. The whole work sparkles with wit and humour."—*Quarterly Review*.

41. DAVID ELGINBROD. By GEORGE MAC DONALD.

"The work of a man of genius. It will attract the highest class of readers."—*Times*.

42. A BRAVE LADY. By the Author of "John Halifax."

"A very good novel; a thoughtful, well-written book, showing a tender sympathy with human nature, and permeated by a pure and noble spirit."—*Examiner*.

43. HANNAH. By the Author of "John Halifax."

"A very pleasant, healthy story, well and artistically told. The book is sure of a wide circle of readers. The character of Hannah is one of rare beauty."—*Standard*.

44. SAM SLICK'S AMERICANS AT HOME.

"This is one of the most amusing books that we ever read."—*Standard*.

45. THE UNKIND WORD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"The author of 'John Halifax' has written many fascinating stories, but we can call to mind nothing from her pen that has a more enduring charm than the graceful sketches in this work."—*United Service Magazine*.

46. A ROSE IN JUNE. By MRS. OLIPHANT.

"A Rose in June' is as pretty as its title. The story is one of the best and most touching which we owe to the industry and talent of Mrs. Oliphant, and may hold its own with even 'The Chronicles of Carlingford.'"—*Times*.

47. MY LITTLE LADY. By E. F. POYNTER.

"There is a great deal of fascination about this book. The author writes in a clear, unaffected style; she has a decided gift for depicting character, while the descriptions of scenery convey a distinct pictorial impression to the reader."—*Times*.

48. PHOEBE, JUNIOR. By MRS. OLIPHANT.

"This novel shows great knowledge of human nature. The interest goes on growing to the end. Phoebe is excellently drawn."—*Times*.

49. LIFE OF MARIE ANTOINETTE.

BY PROFESSOR CHARLES DUKE YONGE.

"A work of remarkable merit and interest, which will, we doubt not, become the most popular English history of Marie Antoinette."—*Spectator*.

"This book is well written, and of thrilling interest."—*Academy*.

50. SIR GIBBLE. By GEORGE MAC DONALD, LL.D.

"Sir Gibble' is a book of genius."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"This book has power, pathos, and humour. There is not a character which is not lifelike."—*Athenaeum*.

51. YOUNG MRS. JARDINE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

"Young Mrs. Jardine' is a pretty story, written in pure English."—*The Times*.

"There is much good feeling in this book. It is pleasant and wholesome."—*Athenaeum*.

52. LORD BRACKENBURY. By AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

"A very readable story. The author has well conceived the purpose of high-class novel-writing, and succeeded in no small measure in attaining it. There is plenty of variety, cheerful dialogue, and general 'verve' in the book."—*Athenaeum*.

"Lord Brackenbury' is pleasant reading from beginning to end."—*Academy*.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

67

68

69

70

